

PROVINCETOWN

A

R

T

S

US: \$6.50 • CANADA: \$9.00

VOLUME 12 • ANNUAL ISSUE • 1996

"What I do is ceremony.
It would be acting,
if somebody else could do
my performances."

— KAREN FINLEY

ISBN 0-944854-30-3

ISSN 1053-5012



DNA GALLERY

288 BRADFORD STREET • PROVINCETOWN, MA 02657 • ABOVE THE PROVINCETOWN TENNIS CLUB

EXHIBITIONS

May 24-June 20	BINDA COLEBROOK installation LILLIAN HSU-FLANDERS installation HIROYUKI HAMADA constructions DAVID VAN VACTOR paintings/drawings
June 21-July 11	SUSAN LYMAN sculpture/drawings DANIEL RANALLI recent work STERCK AND ROZO photographs
July 12-August 1	MARY BEHRENS photo collage/mixed media JAY CRITCHLEY installation KAREN FINLEY installation/drawings JENNY HUMPHREYS installation
August 2-August 22	BOB BAILEY paintings BREON DUNIGAN sculpture TABITHA VEVERS paintings
August 23-Sept. 26	ANCIL CHASTEEN paintings/drawings PETER HUTCHINSON photo collage/constructions
Sept. 27-October 18	KAHN/SELESNICK installation DNA GROUP EXHIBITION

READING SERIES

June 23	TARAS OTUS reading his screenplay, <i>The Couch Story</i>
June 30	PETER ALSON reads from <i>Confessions of an Ivy League Bookie</i>
July 7	PETER HO DAVIES reads from <i>The Ugliest House and Other Stories</i>
July 14	DANIEL MUELLER reads new fiction ELIZABETH MCCracken reads from <i>The Giant's House</i> (NOTE: SUNDAY AT 7PM)
July 20	NICK FLYNN & REBECCA WOLFF read new poems (NOTE: SATURDAY AT 7 PM)
July 21	JIM MCBRIDE reads from <i>The Clearing</i>
July 26	KATHE IZZO hosts <i>Pucker-up</i> readings (NOTE: FRIDAY READING)
July 28	MYRA MCLAREY reads from <i>Water from the Well</i>
August 4	MELANIE BRAVERMAN reads from <i>East Justice</i>
August 7	ELLEN DUDLEY & MARTHA RHODES <i>P.A.P. Press Poets</i>
August 10	JAYNE ANNE PHILLIPS reads new work JILL MCCORKLE reads from <i>Carolina Moon</i> (NOTE: SATURDAY READING AT 7PM)
August 11	DEAN ALBARELLI reads from <i>Cheaters and Other Stories</i>
August 18	LLOYD SCHWARTZ reads from <i>Goodnight, Gracie</i>
August 25	FRANCISCO GOLDMAN reads from <i>The Long Night of White Chickens</i>
Sept. 1	MARIA FLOOK reads from <i>You Have the Wrong Man</i>
Sept. 7	ERICA FUNKHOUSER reads from <i>Sure Shot and Other Poems</i>
Sept. 22	JOHN SKOYLES reads poetry and from his memoir
Sept. 29	POETRY JAM hosted by Ray McNiece
Oct. 6	DAN BARDEN reads from <i>John Wayne, a Novel</i>



(L) *Dwell III*, by Binda Colebrook

(R) *Untitled*, by Hiroyuki Hamada

photo by Jim Zimmerman



EXHIBITION RECEPTIONS first Friday of exhibition from 7-9 pm

READINGS Sundays* at 8 pm followed by booksigning & reception (*unless otherwise noted)

D E F I N I T I V E N E W A R T

Pamela Mandell, Director • Nick Lawrence, Owner
11 - 9 pm daily or by appointment • 508-487-7700



COVE GALLERY

Box 482 Commercial St. Wellfleet, MA 02667 Tel. 508-349-2530



Gouache, 1947 abstraction

John Grillo 40's Abstractions

**Opening Reception:
August 17th 6-8pm**

John Grillo is in a group exhibition of abstract artists who were a major influence in the San Francisco Bay area. This exhibiton is on this summer at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Also representing the following artists:

Leonard Baskin • Mae Bertoni • Meg Black • Tomie De Paola • Bill Evaul • Joan Gitlow • Carla Golembe • Larry Horowitz • Wolf Kahn • Pam Marron • Herman Maril • Alice Mongeau • Barry Moser • Delona Roberts • Satoko • Judith Shahn • Christoph Spath • Simms Taback • Ed Young • Dan Ziembo

Cover **Karen Finley in Provincetown** Photograph by Marian Roth

17 **Gallery Buzz** Heather Pryce-Wright

21 **Letter from the Editor**

KAREN FINLEY

22 **Vacuuming** Karen Finley

23 **Talking with Karen Finley** Christopher Busa

PERFORMANCE

29 **Black Sequins, Black Feathers: Reading Musty Chiffon** Mark Doty

32 **Quintet** Susan Mitchell

CASTLE HILL

36 **Only Connect: The Art of Castle Hill** Hamilton Kahn

39 **The Early Days of Castle Hill** Joyce Johnson

41 **Surviving a Crunch** Eleanor Munro

42 **Good in All Seasons** Barbara Wise

MEMOIRS

43 **Penelope Jencks's Eleanor Roosevelt** Eleanor Munro

48 **Fritz Bultman and Myron Stout: A Provincetown Memoir** Michael Stephens

52 **Photographs of the Extraordinary '60s** Molly Malone Cook

55 **Crying at the Lock: the Journals of John Hultberg** Selection by Christopher Busa

58 **Mark Morrisroe: Beautiful and Bad** Kathe Izzo

LOST FRIENDS

61 **Robert Beauchamp: An Homage** Lawrence Shainberg

62 **George McNeil: 1908-1995** Helen McNeil

POETRY

66 **Michael J. Carter**

Cyrus Cassells

67 **Ellen Dudley**

Christopher Dunn

68 **Nick Flynn**

69 **William Gilson**

Timothy Liu

70 **Atar Hadari**

Dennis Nurkse

Gregory Orr

71 **Martha Rhodes**

Jason Shinder

Jean Valentine

FICTION

72 **The Freedom of Shadows** R.D. Skillings

77 **"Am I Dead Yet?" Mark Morrisroe at 23** Ramsey McPhillips

80 **Cosmic Sketches** Peter Hutchinson

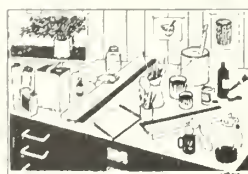
81 **He Comprehends His Dream Before It Fades** Ivan Gold



MARK MORRISROE
PHOTO GAIL THACKER



LEE MUJSELMAN
"ADA'M & EVE AND THEIR FIRST BORN, MUSTY CHIFFON"



JUDITH SHAHN

ARTISTS

- 82 **Domestic Comforts and Body Parts: An Interview with Jenny Humphreys**
Pamela Mandell
- 85 **Susan Baker in Italy** Keith Althaus
Imagining Memory: An Interview with Mary Behrens James Esber
- 87 **Jonathan Blum** Barbara Spindel
Arthur Cohen Bunny Pearlman
- 88 **The Hate Images of James Esber** Mary Behrens
John Grillo: The San Francisco Years Susan Landauer
- 89 **Mary Hackett** Keith Althaus
- 90 **Noa Hall** Joanne Silver
Lester Johnson: in New York and P-town Burt Chernow
- 92 **Chet Jones** Mary Sherman
- 93 **Portia Munson: A Beautiful Suffocation** Pamela Mandell
- 94 **Lee Musselman** Philip Gambone
- 96 **S. Edmund Oppenheim** Lois Griffel
- 97 **Outsider Artists Inside Provincetown** Christine Butler
- 98 **The Portraits of Dan Rupe** Josef Quattro
The Work of Judith Shahn: An Appreciation John Skoyles
- 99 **Life, Color, Form: Provincetown, Koganei** Sheila Sinead McGuinness
- 100 **Japan Quatrains** Sarah Randolph
- 101 **Four Provincetown Art Dealers** Josef Quattro

AUTHORS

- 106 **A Talk with Elizabeth McCracken** Paul Lisicky
- 110 **Confessions of an Ivy League Bookie: A True Tale of Love and the Vig**
by Peter Alson Christopher Busa
- 111 **East Justice** by Melanie Braverman Kate Carter
- 112 **Atlantis** by Mark Doty Cordelia Lawton
- 114 **Remembering William Carlos Williams** by James Laughlin Joshua Weiner
- 115 **Burnt Offerings** by Timothy Liu Christopher Davis
- 116 **Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man: An Interpretive Biography**
by Norman Mailer Christopher Busa
- 118 **A.D.** by Kate Millett Jennifer Liese
- 119 **Secret Life: An Autobiography** by Michael Ryan Michael Stephens
- 120 **Lights, Camera, Poetry! American Movie Poems, the First Hundred Years**
edited by Jason Shinder Wyn Cooper
- 121 **Pollite Society** by Melanie Sumner Paul Lisicky
- 122 **Growing Darkness, Growing Light** by Jean Valentine Michael J. Carter
- 123 **Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams** by Lyle Leverich Robin Lippincott

LANDSCAPING

- 124 **Four Landscapers of the Lower Cape** Joan Marks

TOWNIE BUZZ

- 126 **Augustitis** Louise Rafkin
- 127 **The Siberia Connection** Seth Rolbein
- 129 **The Preservation of the Dead in the Age of
Sanitary Landfill** Margaret Carroll-Bergman
- 131 **Theater Buzz** Josef Quattro
- 134 **Dining Out**

PROVINCETOWN

A R T S

Editor & Publisher

Christopher Busa

Art Director

Ewa Nogiec, ENS Graphics

Articles Editor

Jennifer Liese

Assistant Editor

Josef Quattro

Contributing Editors

Ann Wilson Lloyd

Susan Mitchell

Advertising Production

Douglas Padgett

Advertising Sales

Kaolin Davis

Circulation and Marketing

Heather Pryce-Wright

Published annually in July, *Provincetown Arts* focuses broadly on the artists and writers who inhabit or visit the tip of Cape Cod, and seeks to stimulate creative activity and enhance public awareness of the cultural life of the nation's oldest continuous art colony. Drawing upon a century-long tradition rich in visual art, literature, and theater, *Provincetown Arts* publishes material with a view toward demonstrating that a community of artists, functioning outside the urban centers, is a utopian dream with an ongoing vitality.

© 1996 by Provincetown Arts, Inc.

All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part expressly forbidden without the permission of the publisher.

Unsolicited manuscripts and photographs are welcome on an exclusive basis and will be read between August and February. Reasonable care will be taken in handling materials, but *Provincetown Arts* is not responsible for loss or damage.

Address all correspondence to:

Provincetown Arts

P.O. Box 35, 650 Commercial Street

Provincetown, MA 02657

Tel: (508) 487-3167 • In Mass: (800) 649-1155

Fax: (508) 487-8634

Subscriptions are \$10 per annual issue
Back issues available • Order form on page 35
Information concerning advertising is available on request.

PRINTED IN USA

NATIONAL AND CANADA DISTRIBUTION:

Ingram Periodicals, Nashville, TN

International Periodical Distributors,
Solana Beach, CA

NEW ENGLAND, NEW YORK, LONG ISLAND DISTRIBUTION:

Publishers Circulation Corporation, Parsippany, NJ

ISSN: 1053-5012

ISBN: 0-944854-30-3

MEMBER: COUNCIL OF LITERARY MAGAZINES AND PRESSES



Lois Griffel

Harbor View

*Representing the Cape Cod School of Art and traditional American Impressionism
(Write or come by for 1996 schedule)*

LOIS GRIFFEL

Opening
August 16

Wohlfarth Galleries

3418 9th St. NE
Washington, DC 20017
(202) 526-8022

e-mail: WOHLFARTH @ provincetown . com www . provincetown . com/wohlfarth

234 Commercial St Union Sq.
Provincetown, MA
(508)-487-6569

Colette Hébert

Passions Gallery

Art to fall in love with



MOVEMENT #A1106-5

11"x13"

336 Commercial St. #2 (Pilgrim House Complex) Provincetown MA, 02657
(508) 487-5740 Open Daily 11am-11 pm
Please call for show information



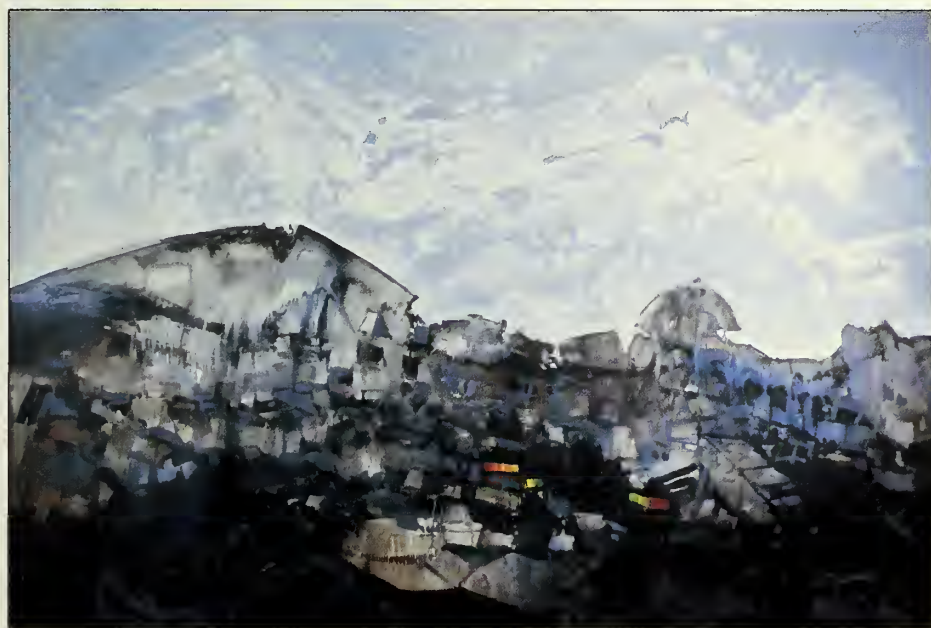
Michael Carroll

August 16- August 29



Gallery 349

349 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
508.487.1200



"Earth Woman I" 1986

Acrylic on canvas, 83"x 143"

John Hultberg

Vintage and Current Work

Represented by

GREGORY GALLERY

41 E. 57 Street, Suite #803
New York, NY 10022
212-754-2760

ELAINE WECHSLER FINE ART

245 W. 104 St., Suite 5B
New York, NY 10025
212-222-3619

ANDERSON GALLERY

Martha Jackson Place
Buffalo, N.Y. 14214
716-834-2579

Exhibition:

Portland Museum of Art, Portland Maine
Paintings on loan and from the permanent collection
July 20 - September 21, 1996



FINE ARTS WORK CENTER IN PROVINCETOWN

SEVEN MONTHS WINTER RESIDENCY
PROVIDING TIME AND SPACE AND A MODEST
STIPEND FOR EMERGING CREATIVE WRITERS
AND VISUAL ARTISTS.

We are offering Summer Workshops and Residencies in Creative Writing and the Visual Arts. Our distinguished faculty in 1996 includes Michael Cunningham, Mark Doty, Gail Mazur, Maile Howe, Carole Maso, Susan Mitchell, Robert Pinsky, Gregory Gillespie, Michael Mazur, Sam McKelley, Paul Resika, Selma Trief and many more. Catalogs for 1996 are available on request. 1997 catalogs will be available in January.

There will be a gala fundraising party Saturday, August 24, 1996.
Please call the office for information.

24 Pearl Street • Provincetown, MA 02657
Tel. (508) 487-4960 • Fax (508) 487-8873

UFO GALLERY

424 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
508-487-4424
Director: Albert Merola

1996 Schedule

July 5-18: **DONNA FLAX
PASQUALE NATALE**

July 19-August 1 **LESTER JOHNSON**

August 2-15 **JAMES BALLA
JACQUELINE HUMPHRIES**

August 16-29 **JAMES HANSEN
FRANK YAMRUS**

August 30-Sept. 12 **RICHARD BAKER
DUANE SLICK**

Also Representing:

Mark Bell • Varujan Boghasian • Peter Busa (estate)
Ann Chernaw • Jim Farsberg (estate) • Cary S. Leibawitz./
Candyass • Michael Mazur • Todd McKie
Bill Mead • Jack Piersan • Sallyann Wekstein.
Picassa ceramic editions & fine prints.

Hours: 11 - 11 Daily

CHERRY STONE GALLERY

Summer 1996 - 25th year

WORKS BY:

Berenice Abbott
Elise Asher
Eugene Atget
Kathleen Bacon
Nancy Balliett
John Beerman
Fritz Bultman
Pat deGroot
Nancy Fried

Karen Gunderson
Chuck Holtzman
William Hudders
Jasper Johns
Nicki Ketchman
Jeanne Kunze
Katherine Lynch
Hal Mayforth
Richard McKown

Dimitry Merinoff
Bruce Monteith
Robert Motherwell
Lillian Orlowski
Renate Ponsold
Marjorie Portnow
Robert Rauschenberg
Jack Tworok
Timothy Woodman

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

June 11- June 22
25 Anniversary Group Show

June 25 - July 6

Photographs:

Marion Roth

Sculpture:

Barbara Andrus

July 9 - July 20

Works on Paper:

Vico Fabbris

Sculpture:

Irén Handschuh

July 23 - August 3

Collage:

Martha Hall

August 6 - August 17

Sculpture:

Paul Bowen

Painting:

Helen Miranda Wilson

August 20 - August 31

New Paintings:

Christina Schlesinger

September 1 - September 14

A Small Retrospective

Robert Beauchamp

Open: Tuesday — Saturday 12:00 - 6:00 p.m.

(and by appointment)

East Commercial Street • Wellfleet, MA

Call: 508-349-3026



RISE TIDE GALLERY

1996 SEASON

Representing:

Donald Beal
Rachel Brown
Robert DuToit
Anthony Fisher
Fred Garbers
Noa Hall
Elsbeth Halvorsen
Sidney Hurwitz
Peter Macara
Joan McD Miller
Martin Mugar
Vita Petersen
Jack Phillips
Michael Rogovsky
David Shainberg
Ellen Sinclair
Peter Watts
Director:
Katrina Parker

REFLECTIONS

June 16-29

**DONALD BEAL
RACHEL BROWN**

June 30-July 13

**ANTHONY FISHER
MARTIN MUGAR**

July 14-27

**ROBERT DuTOIT
NOA HALL**

July 28-August 10

**SIDNEY HURWITZ
ELLEN SINCLAIR**

August 11-24

MUSIC

August 25-September 14

Openings: Sundays, 6-8 PM

494 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
(508) 487-4037
Open daily 11-3, 6-10 PM
Open all day on rainy days
Parking

The Cape Cod Galleries

632A Rte 6A Dennis MA 02638 (508) 385-5436

Owners: Ralph Diamond and Roy Mennell

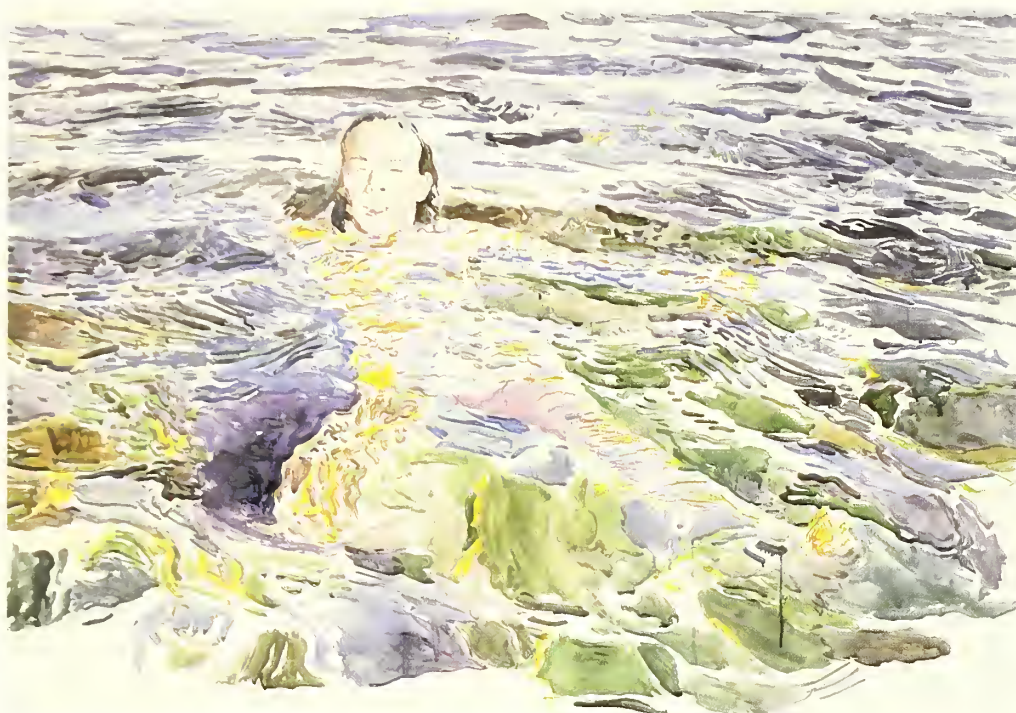
The area's newest showcase for historic Cape Cod and Provincetown Art. Featuring works by Moffet, Whorf, Hawthorne, Diehl, Knaths, Lazzell, Cahoon, Gifford, Wilson, Dunbar and others.



"Provincetown Lane"

John Whorf

*Ask about our changing selection of
American and European Art
Open 11-5 most days*



SWIMMER II, acrylic, craypas on paper 46" x 69.5" signed and dated 1983

ANCIL CHASTEEN

1927 - 1986

Cape Images

at

PROVINCETOWN ART
ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM
460 Commercial St

Aug. 30th thru Oct. 30th

Catalog Available

Concurrent Exhibit

at

DNA GALLERY

288 Bradford St
Provincetown

Aug. 23rd thru Sep. 27th



40"x 54"

Phoenix, 1980

Juanita Guccione
♀

Slides of collection available upon request

Wohlfarth Galleries

3418 9th St. NE
Washington, DC 20017
(202) 526-8022

234 Commercial St Union Sq.
Provincetown, MA
(508)-487-6569

e-mail: WOHLFARTH @ provincetown . com www . provincetown . com/wohlfarth

ROBERT CARDINAL

also representing

Michael Davis

Jo Marie Di Iorio

Francois Faucher

Ann Hartley

Steve Kennedy

Simie Maryles

Frank Milby

Judith Ragusa

Ruth Stecher



"Vermont Farm"

oil on canvas 15"x30"

Kiley Court Gallery

FINE REPRESENTATIONAL PAINTING

445 COMMERCIAL STREET • PROVINCETOWN, MA 02657 • (508) 487-4496

FRANCOIS FAUCHER

Kiley Court Gallery

445 Commercial Street,
Provincetown, MA 02657

Tel: (508) 487-4496

Also represented by:

Vittorio Gallery
Laguna Beach, (Los Angeles), CA
Tel: (714) 497-0431

The Virtual Art Gallery
Palo Alto, (San Francisco) CA
Tel: (415) 327-6785

Ziegenfuss Gallery
Sarasota, FL
Tel: (941) 365-3266

Addison Gallery
Boca Raton, FL
Tel: (407) 338-9007

World Headquarters Gallery
Amherst, (Buffalo) NY
Tel: (716) 691-1750

Korby Gallery
Cedar Grove, NJ
Tel: (201) 239-6789



"Notes de lumiere" (Lighting notes)

oil on canvas, 20"x24"



1996 EXHIBIT SCHEDULE 35th Season

Welcome to one of Cape Cod's finest
galleries and sculpture gardens

Opening Group Show ... May 25 through October
NEW WORKS BY THIRTY GALLERY ARTISTS

Larry D'Amico June 29 - July 12
SUBTLE BUT RAVISHING IMPRESSIONISM

Walter Dorrell July 13 - July 26
OUR "RESIDENT WATERCOLORIST" LYRICAL AND ELEGANT

Robert Sweeney July 27 - August 9
HARMONY OF COLOR AND STRUCTURE IN OIL AND PASTEL

C. Meng August 10 - August 23
FAITHFUL TO NATURE, CHALLENGED BY THE ABSTRACT

Joan Clark August 24 - September 3
WONDERFULLY RENDERED OILS, CAPE AND STILL LIFES

Exhibits Open Saturday Evenings, 6 - 8 P.M..
Please join us in celebrating our superb artists

• GALLERY ARTISTS •

Dan Arpin
March Avery
Ann Bedrick
Bud Bottoms
J. David Broudo
Margaret Bruno
Joan Clark
Larry D'Amico
Walter Dorrell
Terry Dunn
Allen Dwight
John French
Lisbeth Firmin
Irwin Greenberg
Eloise Harmon

Audrey Hemenway
Richard House
William Maloney
Stanley Marcus
Harry Marinsky
C. Meng
Meng Lu Ding
Fred Murphy
Joan Patchen
Connie Saems
Nicholas Shaplyko
Robert Sweeney
Elsa Johnson Tarantall
Armand Vergil
Anita Whitney

Kendall Art Gallery and
Wellfleet Frame Shop
40 E. Main St. P.O. Box 742 Wellfleet, MA 02667
(508)349-2482
Open May - October

LESTER JOHNSON

PROVINCETOWN

1996



Edition of 150, 25"x19", Signed & dated by the artist

New Print

In honor of LESTER JOHNSON's first one
man show in Provincetown in over 30 years

July 19 - August 1, 1996

UFO Gallery Publishers is proud to announce the
publication of a newly editioned print. Available now
through UFO Gallery.

UFO
GALLERY

424 Commercial St.
Provincetown MA, 02657
(508) 487-4424
Fax (508) 487-4743



VISUAL ARTISTS
COOPERATIVE

Box 248 • Wellfleet, MA 02667

Shirley Aleman
Laura Baksa
• William Burney
Lindsay Charles
Georgia M. Coxe
Gay Dickerson
Jane Eccles
Woody English
Roslyn Goldway
Ruth Greenblatt
Marcia Howe
Alexander Jasnow
Ilse Johnson
Tim Joyce
Hans Marum
Barbara Melcher
Blossom Newman
Nancy Nicol
Shirley Nisbett
Erna Partoll
Joseph T. Patrick
Sheila Ryan
Nene Schardt
• Phyllis Szerejko
Fausta Weingeist
• New Members

THE ART OF CARTOGRAPHY Original Antique Maps & Sea Charts



W. Blaeu (1635) Hand-colored copperplate engraving.

This classic work from the Dutch Golden Age of Cartography reveals the Northeast as seen by Europeans just after colonies were launched in Plymouth and Manhattan. North is to the right on the well-composed engraving, which was the first map to depict animals indigenous to North America. A relatively accurate Cape Cod was based on the explorations of Adriaen Block who entered the Bay seven years prior to the arrival of the Pilgrims. Three possible names are given for Cape Cod on the map, including its eventual one. Intriguing inaccuracies elsewhere on the map are Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard shown as a single, horizontally elongated island; Manhattan in a triangular shape; and an oversized and misplaced Lake Champlain.

CALL OR WRITE FOR
ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE \$5

800-423-3741 OR 212-308-0018
FAX 212-308-0074

MARTAYAN LAN
48 EAST 57TH ST.
NEW YORK, NY 10022



GALLERY HOURS: MON-FRI, 10-6
CALL FOR SAT & EVENING HOURS

JACK KELLY'S
ICON
AN ART GALLERY

89 Bradford Street
 (at Masonic Place)
 Provincetown, MA 02657
 508-487-6087



"Free Floating"
 by: ROB ADAMCIK

Photography

234 Commercial Street, Provincetown, Ma 02657 (508)487-6569



"Big Wheel"

JAN FAUL BODIE

Documentation of Fine Art
 Portraits
 Event Photography

***Cape Cod's only gallery
 exclusive to the exhibition
 of Fine Art Photography***

email - WOHLFARTH @ provincetown.com
 www.provincetown.com/WOHLFARTH



Furniture, Antiques, Art,
 Kitsch & More !!!

**SHOWING WORK BY
 CAPE COD ARTISTS**

STEPHEN AIKEN
 SUSAN BAKER
 ARNIE CHARNICK
 ARTHUR COHEN
 WILLIAM EVAUL
 TOM O'CONNELL
Photographs by
 LYNNE BURNS

326 East 11th St. NYC, NY 10003
 Tel/Fax 212-777-0359



We know a fancy ad won't impress you.
 Our art will take care of that.



BERTA WALKER GALLERY

Representing Provincetown-affiliated Artists: past, present and future
 208 Bradford Street • Provincetown • 508 487 6411

WALKER'S WONDERS

Elynn Kröger, Director

A new gallery of folk & functional
 art, sculpture, jewelry, imaginative
 objects, special delights

153 Commercial St. • 508 487 8794

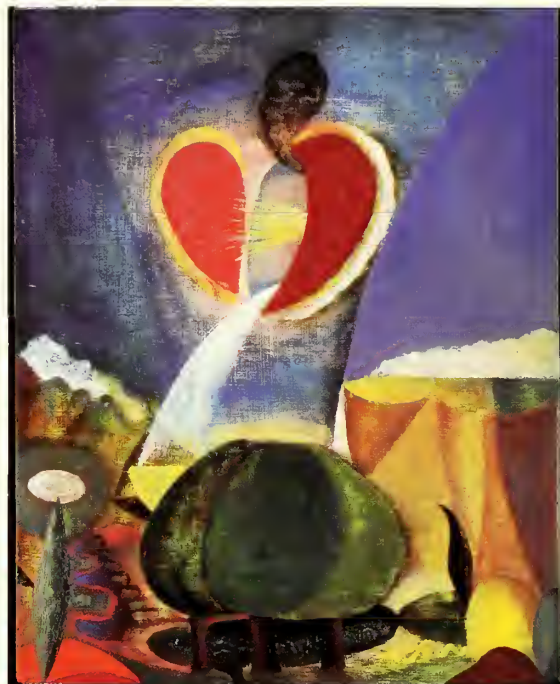
JULIE HELLER GALLERY

PROVINCETOWN ART



BLANCHE LAZZELL

THREE BOATS



POLLY BURNELL

EXHIBITION: AUG. 16 - 22

VOWING



PATRICK WEBB

EXHIBITION: AUG. 23 - SEPT. 5

Exhibition catalog of "Punchinello goes West" available

Punchinello Tells of the Javalinas



CAROLYN EVANS

EXHIBITION: SEPT. 6 - 12

Isolated Shower

A gallery dedicated to the artists who established Provincetown as an important art colony and to those who continue to carry on the tradition: Avery, Bailey*, Brown*, Browne, Burluk, Clymer*, Chaffee, W.M. Chase, de Groot*, Diehl, Freedman*, Grant, Hawthorne, Hensehe, Hofmann, Houdius, Kaplan, Knaths, Lazzell, Leighton, L'Engle*, Lindenmuth, Loch*, Malicoat, Marantz*, Mars, McKain, Merinoff*, Moffet, Nordfeldt, Simon, Sterne, Walkowitz, Weinrich, Zorach, and others. New work by: Benzer, Burnell, Combs, Dubs, Evans, Gamet, Gordon, Mockler, Ohnigian, Sidor, Solomon, Webb, Wheeler.

*ESTATE REPRESENTATION

2 Gosnold Street, Provincetown, MA 02657 (508) 487-2169
(Across from Adams Pharmacy, Town Landing on the Beach)

Bangs Street Gallery

FINE CONTEMPORARY ART



CAROLINE THOMSON *"Rocky and Me," oil on canvas, 1995*



RAMÓN S. ALCOLÉA
"Station of the Heart," terra-cotta plaque, 1995



SARAH OPPENHEIMER *Untitled, oil on canvas, 1996*

REPRESENTING

Ramón Alcoléa • Brian Bomeisler • John Calhoun

Susanna Coffey • Karen Gunderson • Susan Lowe

Larry Mullins • Townie New • Sarah Oppenheimer

Sally Randolph • Marian Roth • Tacke

Caroline Thomson • Peter Thomson • Vicky Tomayko

MARIAN ROTH *"Beach Point," tincan pinhole photograph, 1996*



CORTLAND JESSUP GALLERY

"The Cortland Jessup Gallery
is rousing, risky, politically
creative and as artful as they come"
-The Boston Globe

1996 SCHEDULE

MAY 24 - JUNE 30

"Archeology of the Spirit"

Small Works - Group Show

JAMES VEATCH - ALAN PETRULIS - JOE FIORELLO -

GRACE JARA - JOAN WATTS - JOHN WAX - SHARI

KADISON - X. WOODS - EMILY FULLER

MARK NICKERSON

And New Works by Gallery Artists

JUNE 14 - 30

KATHI SMITH

JULY 3 - JULY 17

NANCY GROSSMAN

JONATHAN WEINBERG

BRUCE CRATSELY

JULY 19 - 31

YAYOI KUSAMA

ULRIKE FRANK

AL WASSERMAN

ROBERT HECHLER

AUGUST 2 - AUGUST 14

KENJI ENDO

HARUKO OIE

JOE KAMINSKI

JOANNE BERGHOLD

AUGUST 16 - AUGUST 28

JULIET HOLLAND

RUTH GREEN

ROSS MUNRO

ALEX EMILE

AUGUST 30 - SEPTEMBER 11

DAVID DUNLOP

JOE FIORELLO

MIKE WRIGHT

SEPTEMBER 13 - OCTOBER 2

Another Cross Cultural Exchange exhibition
in Association with Lamia Ink!

4 From Gallery New World, Dusseldorf Germany

(Cortland Jessup Gallery will exhibit in
Gallery New World November 8 - 30, 1996)

OCTOBER 4 - OCTOBER 20

CHRISTINA SCHLESINGER

LINDA STEIN

LOLA FLASH

KATE MILLETT

432 COMMERCIAL ST.

PROVINCETOWN MA 02657

(508) 487-4479

Opening Receptions Fridays 7-10



PETER BUSA
1947-1948 Ink/paper, 18"x24"

Figures

PETER BUSA

represented by:

UFO
GALLERY

424 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
(508) 487-4424
Fax (508) 487-4743
Director: Albert Merola

EAST END GALLERY

- 1996 SCHEDULE -

May 24 - June 24

Art On The Beach

June 25 - July 25

Art On The Beach II

"The Eccentrics"

August 2 - August 15

Rebecca Doughty
Bunny Pearlman

August 16 - August 29

Arthur Cohen

August 30 - September 16

Nicholas Kahn & Richard Selesnick

September 20 - October 3

Artist's Books

October 4 - October 17

Susan Jennings
(Installation)

October 18 - October 31

Larry Collins
(Vietnam Photographs)

Representing the work of: Susan Belton, Arthur Cohen, Larry Collins, Michael Costello, Laura Davidson, Rebecca Doughty, Holly Greenberg, Susan Jennings, Nicholas Kahn & Richard Selesnick, Peter Madden, Cherie Mittenenthal, Peter O'Sullivan, Bunny Pearlman, Cathy Rose, Susan Sawyer, Thomas Vinton, Jean Vallon, Sheryl White

Director: Bunny Pearlman

In our new location at:
349 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
(508) 487-4745



Gallery

The Underground Gallery

House of Outsider Art

PO Box 943
Provincetown, MA

Presents a powerful and
cohesive collection of art by
ARTISTS OUTSIDE THE MAINSTREAM

- Gerald Walsh Provincetown, MA
- Maurice Hansen New Haven, CT
- Vasilios Lois New Haven, CT
- Anne Brown Marstons Mills, MA
- Bob Cant New Haven, CT
- Elisa Vegliante New Haven, CT
- Bill Bowers Danvers, MA
- Dana Baldwin Naumann Branford, CT
- Chris London Hartford, CT
- Anthony Yoffe Boston, MA
- Henry Loomis East Haven, CT
- Diana Birkelund Hartford, CT

Director: Earl DeVries

Curated by Christine Butler
of Branford, Connecticut

(508) 487-2589

LONG POINT GALLERY

Robert Beauchamp

Varujan Boghosian

Paul Bowen

Fritz Bultman

Carmen Cicero

Gilbert Franklin

Sideo Fromboluti

Edward Giobbi

Dimitri Hadzi

Budd Hopkins

Leo Manso

Michael Mazur

Robert Motherwell

Renate Ponsold

Paul Resika

Judith Rothschild

Sidney Simon

Nora Speyer

Tony Vevers

1996 SEASON

June 23-July 13
A Story To Tell

July 14-July 27
Michael Mazur
Eros: Works by Gallery Artists

July 28-August 10
Edward Giobbi
Renate Ponsold

August 11-August 24
Gilbert Franklin
Dimitri Hadzi

August 25-Sept. 14
Summer's Work

RECEPTIONS ON SUNDAYS 5:30-7:30 PM

DIRECTOR: ROSALIND PACE 508-487-1795

492 COMMERCIAL STREET, PROVINCETOWN, MA

OPEN DAILY 11AM-3PM & 8PM-10PM OR BY APPT.

OPEN RAINY AFTERNOONS AMPLE PARKING

PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM

1996

Our 81st Exhibition Season



FOUR GALLERIES

FEATURING

OUTER CAPE ARTISTS

ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING



Chamber Music Concert Series

Theatrical and Dance
Performances

PAAM Forums

O'Neill-By-The-Sea Festival

Yoga and Dance Classes

Museum School Classes

Library and Archives



Annual Consignment Auction
of Early Provincetown Art Works

Saturday, September 21



460 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
508 487-1750

Visit Cape Cod's oldest,
educational organization

Pilgrim Monument & Provincetown Museum



High Pole Hill • P.O. Box 1125
Provincetown, MA 02657

(508)-187-1310 • Fax# (508)-487-1702

CAPE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

*Celebrating the
contribution of Cape Artists
to the history of American Art*

EXHIBITIONS:

June 29 - August 25

CAPE COD'S FIRST COLLECTORS:
Treasures from the China Trade

September 21 - November 17

MARY HACKETT:
A survey of paintings

Reel Art Cinema

ALTERNATIVE VISIONS
Wednesday - 7:30
Thursday - 2:30 pm & 7:30 pm



Cape Museum of Fine Arts

Route 6A, Dennis MA
(508) 385-4477

On the grounds of the Cape Playhouse

Tuesday — Saturday 10 am to 5 pm
Sunday 1 to 5pm
Thursdays to 7:30 pm

ADMISSION CHARGED

Come in to enjoy THE PROVINCETOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Featured Exhibits

**PROVINCETOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT:
Decades of Family and Brotherhood**

WORKING WOMEN:

The 40's and The 90's

90's Photography by Marian Roth
Artist Reception: June 16th at 3-5 pm

Also visit our permanent collection including

- The Rose Dorteia
66 ft Fishing Schooner Model
 - Artifacts of Provincetown's
Fishing Industry
 - Displays of 19th Century Village Life
- Hours: 10am to 6pm Free to Public
Children under 12 years of age must be
accompanied by an adult.
Experience Provincetown's unique
place in American History!



Located at Center and Commercial Sts., Provincetown, MA
View us on the Internet -<http://www.ProvincetownVillage.com>

SUMMER WORKSHOPS IN TRURO

PAINTING / SCULPTURE
PRINTMAKING / WRITING
DRAWING / PHOTOGRAPHY
CLAY / METAL / WOOD
KIDS' CLASSES

FEATURING:

MARIA MAGDALENA CAMPOS-PONS
SIDNEY HURWITZ ... DANIEL MACK
WOODY HUGHES ... MIKHAIL ZAKIN
MARGE PIERCY ... ALAN DUGAN
ETHEL EDWARDS ... SIDNEY SIMON
ELEANOR MUNRO ... JIM PETERS
PAUL BOWEN...JOEL MEYEROWITZ
... ET AL ...

CALL FOR CATALOGUE:
(508) 349-7511

CASTLE HILL

TRURO CENTER FOR THE ARTS
P.O. Box 756, TRURO, MA 02666



Photo by Marian Roth

GALLERY BUZZ

BY HEATHER PRYCE-WRIGHT

ADDISON HOLMES GALLERY begins its first season in Orleans. Herb Holmes and Helen Addison, head of Addison Advertising and Public Relations, bring marketing expertise to the field of fine art. We wish them well.

BANGS STREET GALLERY has moved 100 yards west, from the foot of Bangs Street to Kiley Court. An independent soul, Gillian Drake, remains the director, focusing on emerging artists such as Caroline Thompson, whose work is intensely autobiographical and emotionally provocative. Others include Ramon Alcolea, Brian Bomeisler, Susanna Coffey, Susan Lowe, Sarah Oppenheimer, Sally Randolph, Marian Roth, and Peter Thompson.



CAROLINE THOMPSON, "DARK END OF THE STREET"

THE CAPE COD GALLERIES in Dennis, a new partnership of two specialists in early Provincetown and Cape Cod artists, Roy Mennell and Ralph Diamond, opened in May, a resounding debut that had the pair scrambling to replace work that sold by Lucy L'Engle, Charles Hawthorne, Ross Moffett, Gerit Beneker, Arthur V. Diehl, John Whorf, and Karl Knaths.

At CHASE GALLERY in Boston this winter and spring, Anne and Cynthia Packard, mother and daughter, had back-to-back exhibitions.

John Grillo, whose exhibition at COVE GALLERY is reviewed in this issue, also created three mural-size paintings for Cafe Heaven in Provincetown. Tall white walls create a sense of space so that the small restaurant never feels crowded. They are punctured by Grillo's huge depictions—



LUCY L'ENGLE, 1943

apertures—of irradiated, kinetic-yellow beach life. At Cafe Heaven one might eat eggs sunnyside-up, but under breezy fans.

DNA's erratic impressario, Nick Lawrence, revealed his brilliance by engaging director Pamela Mandell, who possesses a genius for organization. DNA's Jay Critchley published an artist's book with the Parfait de Cocoa Press in Cambridge, *Playing Games*, a parody of certain Olympian ideals about sports. Critchley writes, "One implication of the project for me is the insight that physical contact between people of the same sex might, in fact, be a basic human need and one of the motivations for sports itself." Critchley, with a collage of words and text, obliquely and parabolically shows some curious contradictions between sports ideals: sports are at once healthy, nonsexual, and promoting of teamwork while their underbelly remains about money, ego, and eroticism. For example, beneath a figure pulling at the pants of another, Critchley writes, "Unable to figure out the sex of some female athletes after a hormone test, the officials had a brainstorm—just look!"

Opening in August at DNA and in September at the ART ASSOCIATION, are memorial exhibitions of work by Ancil Chasteen. From 1967 until his death in 1986, Chasteen worked in Provinc-

etown or Truro studios and showed regularly at the old Provincetown Group Gallery. Chasteen's subject was the mobility of light as it passes and plays on ponds, trees, foliage, and on the faces of people. It was a natural bridge for Chasteen to go from Monhegan to Woodstock to Truro. He loved refraction in water, which seemed, for him, a way of perfecting the moment. He depicted his wife Stella in the water floating, doing a back stroke, or merely laying still in shallow water with her limbs and torso submerged.

THE EAST END GALLERY is in a new location barely on the border of the East End. Now on the waterfront adjacent to Gallery 349, Bunny Pearlman is pleased to let us know you can en-



ANCIL CHASTEEN, "AT THE TENNIS CLUB," 1982



PETER HUTCHINSON AND NICK LAWRENCE AT DNA



MARY BEHRENS, DANIEL RANALLI, AND TABITHA VEVERS AT DNA GALLERY

ter her gallery from Commercial Street as well as the beach. New artists include Rebecca Doughty, Susan Jennings, and the estate of David Vereano. The collaborative team of Nicholas Kahn and Richard Selesnick had their solo debut in New York this winter at MONIQUE KNOWLTON. They possess amazing technical skills for producing faux-Renaissance portraits of real people who seem fictional and fictional people who seem real.

At 53 WEST 9TH STREET, New York City, in the house owned by the late Dr. Alice Fabian of Provincetown and New York, seven artists made site-specific projects on the five floors so ruthlessly cleaned by housecleaners prior to sale. A few Polaroid photos were found. On one Dr. Fabian had written: "Fresh paint in front of 51 West 9th Street, blurred due to camera shutter failing to click properly once again whenever I take pictures of symbolic or coded shapes." The artists, inspired by the ghost of Dr. Fabian, a child psychiatrist, found ways to return life to the empty house. Dariusz Lipski's piece, "Normal," is an exploration of how psychiatric norms of illness and health are constructions of a specific class. In the salon, he installed five steel structures suspending large rocks over broken glass imprinted with sample psychiatric questions taken from a textbook.

FINE ARTS WORK CENTER fellow Ellen Gallagher leaped into the big time with her first one-person show at MARY BOONE in New York. A few weeks after the opening, she was back at work in her Provincetown studio, saying she wanted a TV for the winter, but that she didn't want to pay for it. We think a lot of artists are like that—some won't pay for firewood, some won't pay for sex, and some writers won't pay for computers—they prefer to receive these things as gifts, the way their art often comes to them. One of the few local artists to become a fellow of the Work Center (others are Richard Baker and the collaborative team of Richard Selesnick and Nicholas Kahn), Tabitha Vevers had her finest hour in early April with a show of work produced over her productive winter. The Work Center's Provincetown Print Project has selected Mary Heilmann as the 1996 Florsheim Fund Prize recipient. She will work with co-directors of the Print Project, Bob Bailey and Andrew Mockler, in Mockler's New York studio and present the finished prints in Provincetown in October.

GALLERY 349 director Kir Priore is excited about several new artists. Eric Aho, 29, came over from Boston last year, where he showed at THOMAS SEGAL, said he had been painting P-town and asked whether he could have a show—yes, this July. Another new artist at 349 is Elizabeth Carney, 25, a long-time summer resident of Provincetown and a graduate of Smith College. This September marks Carney's first exhibit in Provincetown and promises to show an exceptional new talent. Harriet Casdin-Silver, a Boston artist associated with MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies, had her first Provincetown view-

ing at 349, where the exhibition of holograms was installed by Michael Landis. The very aliveness of the hologram image, which shifts as the viewer moves, creates an eerie, death-in-life feeling, as if a live person were imprisoned in a block of ice that is translucent on three sides.



ERIC AHO, "ESTUARY," 1995

PAT HEARN, escaping the heat of the city, will again take a break from running her New York gallery and vacation in Provincetown this August.

New this year, ICON is a small gallery begun by real estate mogul Jack Kelly a few doors down from the throbbing music at the Atlantic House. Included in the roster are Ron Fowler, Bill Wightman, Dee Kennedy, and Barry Barnes, the multi-talented owner of Gallerani's Cafe.

At CORTLAND JESSUP, the Japan connection thrives—see reports in this issue by Sheila McGuinness and Sarah Randolph on their trip to Tokyo. Artist Yayoi Kusama, now a culture hero in Japan, did her time in P-town in the late '50s and '60s, visiting and performing at the Chrysler Art Museum. This summer she will show new prints at Cortland Jessup. Curated by Cortland Jessup, an exhibit of new work by the Japanese exchange artists will be shown in 1997 in New York. Continuing her cross-cultural exchange exhibits, Jessup will bring work from Dusseldorf, Germany, to Provincetown in September and her gallery will exhibit in Dusseldorf's Gallery New World, in November.

KENDALL GALLERY in Wellfleet is showing two of the most talented artists to come out of China in recent years. Charles Meng, originally from Shanghai, now lives in New York and summers in Wellfleet. Luding Meng, originally from Beijing's famous Central Academy of Fine Arts, is known as one of the contributing sculptors of the huge "Goddess of Democracy" at the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1990. This summer, for the first time, he will be showing large oils described by director Myra Dorrell as "wonderful."

KILEY COURT GALLERY's Frank Milby was engaged by the Provincetown Chamber of Commerce to repaint three "Welcome to Provincetown" signs, at the airport and at two highway locations. The signs were hardly legible and the seagull on the piling was very faded.



PAUL BOWEN, INSTALLATION AT PAAM, 1996

LONG POINT GALLERY's youngest member, Paul Bowen, had a busy year with his first one-person New York show since 1991 at JACK SHAINMAN and a retrospective at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum this spring in which 10 works filled the main gallery. The Provincetown exhibition, accompanied by a handsome catalogue with essays by B.H. Friedman and Sara London, was the privileged event of the off-season. The galleries were packed. Visitors came from afar. Old friends such as Bert Yarborough, Cynthia Huntington, Susan Lyman, Jim Peters, and Vicky Tomayko showed up. There seemed to be tremendous support for our type of hero who quietly perseveres and produces poetic work. In her review in *Art in America*, Ann Wilson Lloyd wrote of the newer works that nearly all "radiate out from a vertical axis, like crude stars, and seem poised between collapsing and unfolding." Several other Long Point artists had exhibitions in New York: Carmen Cicero at JUNE KELLY GALLERY, Dimitri Hadzi at KOUROS GALLERY, Michael Mazur at MARY RYAN, and Nora Speyer showed her collage drawings at DENISE BIBRO FINE ART. Using nothing but pressed charcoal, black oil paint thinned with turpentine, and cut-out white paper, she proceeds with a plodding method, correcting, erasing, and adding, until an accidental underdrawing emerges.

THE PILGRIM MONUMENT AND PROVINCETOWN MUSEUM sponsored an unusual exhibition of drawings and letters by Edward Hopper and never-before-exhibited oil and watercolor paintings, crayon drawings, and pencil sketches by his wife Josephine Hopper. The exhibition was curated by J. Anton Schifffenhaus, whose mother was a close friend of Josephine and the heir to Hopper's Truro house and studio. Also included are samples from Josephine's diaries, found in the studio and utilized by Gail Levin in her recent biography, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* (Knopf).

PROVINCETOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM, the former Chrysler Art Museum purchased by the citizens of Provincetown in 1976, showcases the twin histories created on the sea and in the studio. The fishermen and whalers have their counterparts with the artists and writers who have sojournd here, and it is wonderful to compare the *Pico*, an actual whaling canoe, used to hunt whales, with the dune shack Harry Kemp used to isolate himself when he was writing poetry.

After many years of service by Josephine Del Deo, the museum has a new director, Dale Fanning, who is overqualified and underpaid.

At the PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM, this year's winner of the national competition was Nancy Natale's collage "Double Hair Fan." She will have a one-person show of her work next year, as last year's winner, Samuel Tager, was awarded a one-person exhibition this year. Tager's sculpture, with their effect of scale models of architectural projects, unnerves one with the idea that the great buildings we make are merely the dwarfs of our dreams.



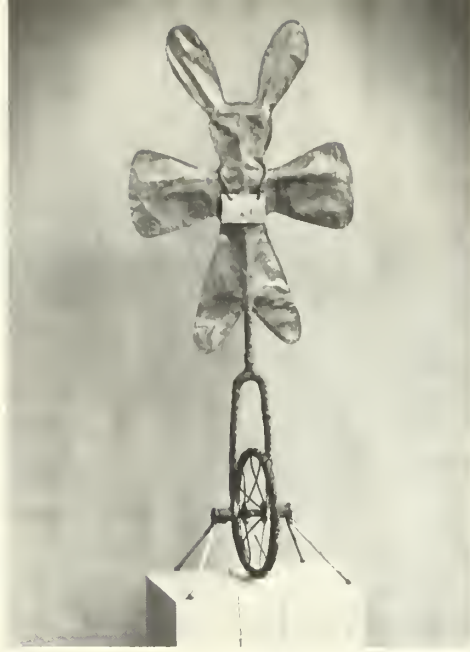
SAMUEL TAGER, "SPLIT CHANDIGARH #2"



ROBYN WATSON AND MARY KELLY

The new director of the MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL, Mary Kelly, is pictured here with Robyn Watson, director of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, which hosted an official visit in the Massachusetts community where so many artists, writers, and art organizations have received grants. This year recipients include: in fiction, Dean Albarelli, Melanie Braverman, Peter Ho Davies, William J. Mann, and Daniel Mueller, and in poetry, Melanie Braverman (again!). Polly Burnell and Nick Lawrence each won a \$7500 grant from the New England Foundation for the Arts, hers in painting, his in drawing. Dean Albarelli's collection, *Clusters and Other Stories*, to be published by St. Martin's in August, has been selected for inclusion in Barnes and Noble's "Discover Great New Writers" series, featured in 500 bookstores nationwide.

RICE/POLAK co-owner Marla Rice spent the winter in Cambridge working to develop the Bank of Boston's corporate art collection. She has in turn enriched her Provincetown roster with several new artists, including Larry Calkins from the state of Washington, a painter-sculptor whose art is about his love for the small community where he was raised, "one of the prettiest places on earth, also one of the ugliest, where trees cover the canyons and spill shadows and rob senses and kill ambitions and give nothing back."



LARRY CALKINS, "WAIT WAIT—HURRY HURRY," 1996

Housed in a simple adobe, the VICTORIA MAASE STOLL STUDIO AND GALLERY, Camino Alley, off Canyon Road, Santa Fe, offered opportunities for people to meet the artists and hear them talk about their work. Stoll, formerly of Provincetown, where she lived a very active and social life, spent the last six years being a recluse. Of her series of artist talks she says, "Artists don't normally do this in Santa Fe, but other art communities I've lived in do it regularly." One of her guest artists this winter was Provincetown sculptor Susan Lyman, whose twisted wood pieces were said to resemble a large spider in a yoga position.

At TENNYSON GALLERY a huge vertical mural by Vol Quitzow, "Memoirs," hangs as a summary of the artist's life, giving spatial form to a turbulent narrative. Quitzow said when he attempted to paint "eye to hand devoid of mental processes curious things resulted. A painted rip in the canvas, not real, exposed beneath it the night-lit oil refineries of the 1950s Los Angeles area, and delicate sculptural forms of pre-computer chip guided-missile inertial-guidance mechanisms from the same era loomed here and there among skewed Erich Mendelsohn-Bernard Maybeck-William Wurster-Frank Lloyd Wright-Le Corbusier-Marcel Breuer-influenced architecture and Buckminster Fuller-influenced engineering. Some faces were supported externally, even structured internally with space frames. Some were alien. Some, as friends noted, had the almond eyes of my late wife Ann."

TRURO CENTER FOR THE ARTS AT CASTLE HILL celebrates its 25th anniversary season—see the reports in this issue. One of its faculty, Anna Poor, who will teach a sculpture course in August, was included in the national showcase exhibition at the Alternative Museum in New York this June.



ANNA POOR, "USELESS OBJECT OF SALVATION: STRETCHER"



Pictured here are 12 of the feisty group of 25 maverick artists who form the VISUAL ARTISTS CO-OPERATIVE: (standing, left to right) Shirley Nisbet, Jane Eccles, Phyllis Szerejko, Alex Jasnow, Blossom Newman, Gay Dickerson; (seated, left to right) Ruth Greenblatt, Erna Partoll, Sheila Ryan, Fausta Weingeist, Hans Marum, Lindsay Charles.

We came across Norman Mailer's drawings at BERTA WALKER's first opening this season, reminding us of her exhibition of Mailer's drawings in 1992 for a benefit for the Fine Arts Work Center. Mailer had not yet published his biography of Picasso (reviewed in this issue) and it was not yet clear how much Mailer's drawing owes to the fact that his daily practice as a writer is to compose in longhand, his fingers shaping every syllable that he writes. And so his extension into drawing takes off from this physical fact, like a metaphor, and Mailer shows the linkage of the turn of a phrase and the turn of a line. Mailer first made a suite of drawings in the wake of his research into a compendium of Picasso's work. He did not make another drawing for 10 years, then erupted with another suite characterized by use of the line to make meaning rather than express feeling, mood, quality.



NORMAN MAILER, "LUCKY 7," 1985

UFO artist Jack Pierson was a feature in "Boston School," last winter's exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston and had a one-person exhibition of oversize, lush, but not over-ripe portraits at LUHRING AUGUSTINE GALLERY in New York. His departed colleague Mark Morrisroe is the subject of Kathe Izzo's memoir and Ramsey McPhillip's biofiction, both published in this issue. Another UFO artist, James Balla, is now represented in Boston by MILLER/BLOCK GALLERY. ■

Heather Pryce-Wright, a pseudonym for the editor, is the magazine's mythical director of circulation and marketing.

BOSTON

The Alternate Route

Traveling to Provincetown?

Fly Cape Air.

Just a twenty minute flight.

Quick. Easy. No hassles.

PROVINCETOWN

Cape Air
FLYING FOR THE CAPE & ISLANDS

For reservations and information

1-800-352-0714

Year 'round service. Up to twenty flights daily during peak season.



Celebrate

Provincetown

52 weeks a year.

Subscribe to the

PROVINCETOWN
BANNER

487-7400

487-7144 fax

P.O. Box 1978

Provincetown, MA 02657

First Landing Celebration fireworks sponsored by the Provincetown Banner. Photo by Vincent Guadagno

Provincetown possesses a natural harbor and a natural sense of the theatrical, always has. This year marks the 80th anniversary of the production of Eugene O'Neill's first plays, performed in a shed on a shaky East End wharf. Here are many makeshift stages, including Commercial Street with its parade of costumes, especially resonant at night when people, saturated from sunlight, seem back-lit as if on a movie set, larger than life, luminous and more meaningful. Every photographer knows to set the f-stop higher in our ordinary daylight than under the burning spotlights of Hollywood. Summer after summer, out of the winter cocoon of rural isolation, crowds emerge to participate in a community theater.

This year we focus on the charismatic Karen Finley, whose spirit of openness and tolerance, affection and outrage, so typifies our local passions. Through the lens of Mark Doty's uncommon mind, we enter the world of drag and learn to decode its body language. Through the astonishing self-interview by Susan Mitchell, with five speakers—four Susans and a fifth character representing a marginalized portion of the self—we experience the exhilaration of thinking as performance.

If performance is a theme that pervades this issue, so too is how the contemporary imagination shapes the past. Thus we include a number of memoirs exploring how the mythic might operate in the present without being nostalgic. What does performance have to do with memoir? It has to do with the way we imagine memory and animate the inert. The life and career of Mark Morrisroe, made tender by a love that transcended his origin as the bastard son of the Boston Strangler, is the subject of Kathe Izzo's bittersweet recollection and Ramsey McPhillips's "biofiction." Eleanor Munro's chronicle of the struggle of Penelope Jencks to sculpt Eleanor Roosevelt is at once a parabolic demonstration of that struggle. Nick Flynn, showing that what can be said in the poem is different from what can be said in an essay, tells the harrowing story of his matter-of-fact encounter with his homeless father. R. D. Skillings, in high style and exquisite prose, provides a detailed word portrait of the extraordinary '60s, also the subject of Molly Malone Cook's photographic album. Another miracle of survival through sharing is the Castle Hill Center for the Arts, for a quarter-century a beehive of creative activity in tiny Truro.



CHRISTOPHER BUSA AND KAREN FINLEY ON BEACH POINT, PROVINCETOWN

In an age of personalities packaged for mass consumption, the performance artist seeks to unwrap the individual. Performance art is a postmodern form of primitive storytelling. Whether the story is told around a campfire or in some "alternative" space in the chinks of society, the audience always feels the thinness of the fourth wall, becoming as much participant as witness. Karen Finley declares that what she does is not acting but ceremony. Often, when a single person enralls a group, it is because the group has inspired the performer, and so what is special about performance art is less the performance or the art and more the vitality of the relationship between performer and audience.

Putting out a magazine is something of a performance, and I will miss the years that *Provincetown Arts* was produced largely as a mom-and-pop partnership between Gillian Drake and myself. This year a small staff was created, and it was fitting that Ewa Nogiec, who has been associated with the magazine since our first appearance as a 24-page tabloid in 1985, assumed responsibility for design and production. An annual magazine is a history of habits and a pattern of energy, leaving a record that can be read like tree rings. Here, on the end of a spiral of sea-borne sand, curling back upon itself as it expands, we exist. The land meets the sea and we live in the margin. It gives me pleasure to know that the magazine is an idea that inspired so many talented people to work so hard for so long.

Chris Busa

CHRISTOPHER BUSA

Vacuuming

From *The American Chestnut*

BY KAREN FINLEY

TONITE, I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU how I stayed up till 5 a.m.—for my daughter couldn't sleep—and then . . .

I just thought that I used to stay up till dawn five nights a week cause I was a hipster—a cooler—a tanker—a swanker—on the scene—making the scene. So, I said to myself as I'm watching Jemima Puddle Duck Henny Penny Tom Kitten, I guess my daughter is just trying to get me back to being with it. I'll just pretend I'm on the third floor of Danceteria while I'm watching an episode of Winnie the Pooh in the S and M bar, 100 Acre Wood. Winnie the Pooh—now that's a case of an eating disorder if I ever saw one. That 100 acre wood sure has a psychological profile: Tigger—a manic depressive or hyperactive, Rabbit—passive aggressive, Eeyore—just plain depressed with esteem problems, Piglet—insecure who stutters, Owl—delusions of grandeur, Christopher Robin—the enabler. And I can just imagine them all at the dungeon. Winnie in chaps. Winnie the Pooh. Isn't that a girl's name for a boy bear? Don't you always wonder about that pooh-poopoo shit thang going on there? Hi, I'm Pooh. Hi, I'm a piece of shit. Hi, I'm a piece of dung. Hi, just call me feces face. Dung head. OR, call me Winnie. Winnie the Pooh. Isn't that a girl's name for a boy bear? Piglet is in some corner being peed on by Tigger. Eeyore is having his tail nailed on his hiny saying, "Could you nail that tail in my butt a little slower Christopher Robin?" Chris has some police gear on, using his riding crop. Oh, I can't wait for Gap Kids and Disney to pick up on this. Rabbit is the biggest Queen done up as Greta Garbo playing with himself in some corner but he never gets quite

off looking in some mirror. I want to be alone. I want to be alone. Tigger, stop bothering me. I'm watching Beatrix Potter and I swear to God I saw Tom Kitten's butthole. I want to see that purple dinosaur's butthole now!

I'M THE KIND OF PARENT that goes all the way with Barney for my daughter—Barney sheets, blankets, pillowcases, placemats, purses, stroller. I feel it is important in child development for the child to adore something the parent hates—

When I walked into Barneys, I immediately realized that they don't have a children's section. I'd love to buy a Barneys onesie. When my daughter needed to nurse while I was trying something on the saleswoman started yelling at me. "Don't do it here!"

I responded, "Nursing is fashionable."

She said, "Don't you dare change your baby here!"

And I said, "I think you have some unresolved sexual tension."

And she said, "Don't accuse me of being scatter-brained."

Then another salesperson came in and said, "Oh, ignore old Margaret Thatcher. She's the only man in the cabinet."

And I said, "That's a sexist thing to say."

And a customer said, "Can you blame her? Would you trust the chocolate-smeared woman changing her baby in your dressing room?"

SO THE PILOT SHOT DOWN IN BOSNIA has found GOD. He says, "God saved me." I don't think sucking your army fatigue sock sweat to survive is God saving you.

I don't think eating cow pee grass to survive is God saving you.

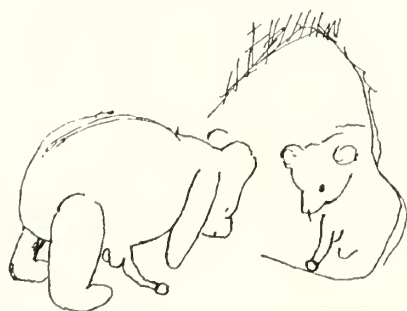
I don't think licking up ant hills to survive is God saving you.

God always gets into it.

To me God getting into the act is finding a pack of Diet Coke, some reefer, and Scotty, beam me up!

To me God getting in the act is getting the war over with—stopping the murder, the rape, the genocide, the ethnic cleansing.

God doesn't get involved there.



There is nothing sexier than a bear weenie

Talking with Karen Finley

BY CHRISTOPHER BUSA

That's God for you.

God knows a media opportunity when he sees one.

OR THE WOMAN WHO LOST TWO CHILDREN in the Oklahoma bombing just had her tubes untied so she could have more children. The doctor and the hospital are performing the surgery for free. When the woman heard the news she said, "It was a gift from God." Gee, wasn't that nice of God to finally show up.

You know God is to blame for a lot of things.

Everyone blames sex on TV, violence on TV, books, music, Hollywood, artists like me.

There are wars fought in the name of God
Killings, murders in the name of God
God told me to do it

The Bible told me to do it
If we are to censor anything
I think we should start with God

BUT THERE IS A MIRACLE HERE—

I meet the two young Bosnian Muslim men. They are attending school here. Their mother is a teacher and started a business that employed women. Their mother is a Muslim and a feminist. The mother owned a factory that employed women. She employed a young Serbian woman who wanted to go to school. Their mother lent her employee the money and encouraged her to go to school. During the war, their mother was captured and was to be killed. She was in the truck waiting to be killed. She sat next to the driver who was to kill her. It turns out he was the brother of the Serbian woman that she encouraged and lent the money to. The driver said



*Stop bitching. I told you ~~put~~
on baby powder before putting
on that rubber. But NO o-o-o
you had to be the big bad bear.*

he would not have her killed but would instead bring her to a concentration camp. Change her identity. And her two young sons, boys really, felt this was a miracle . . . Being in a concentration camp is NO MIRACLE . . . This is God showing up?

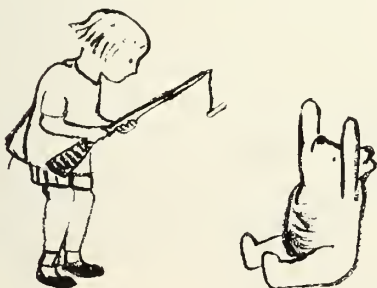
I'M IN PROVINCETOWN AT THE PLAYGROUND. And there are two boys ages four and six and they start kicking another boy. The boy who is being kicked, his parents are there and the mother of the two boys who are kicking is there. The mother of the boy who was just kicked says, "We are trying to teach our son not to fight with his body, not to hurt someone but to use words." The mother of the two boys who just kicked says, "I used to think that but they are rough boys and other kids were fighting so I just let them be out there to fend for themselves. It's important for boys to be able to fight." The boys who had kicked were on the slide. A little baby girl had crawled on the slide and was enjoying herself. The boys ran up the slide the wrong way and the baby was stuck. The baby's mother was there. The mother removed her daughter. One of the boys shouted on the slide, "I'll kiss your fucking ass. I'll kiss your fucking ass. I'll beat your fucking ass." His mother didn't say anything but after awhile she said, "They don't know what they are saying." I think they know exactly what they are saying. ■

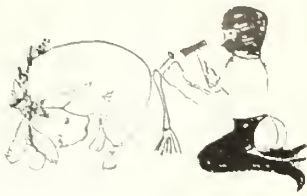
KAREN FINLEY retreated to Provincetown during the summer of 1990, following highly publicized attacks by North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, who charged that her work, involving nudity, the rights of homosexuals, and the rage of women, was "obscene." Although obscenity often plays into art's effort to say the unsayable and to confront taboos, the wide-bodied and outspoken Senator, speaking guiltlessly from the podium of a tobacco state, persuaded the National Endowment for the Arts to deny Finley a grant already recommended by the NEA peer panel. Only recently did she win a lawsuit restoring the award, and she remains embroiled in another case about what constitutes a standard of decency. The shock of the experience has hardly abated for Finley, who recalls that her first small NEA grant, coming at the beginning of her career in the early '80s, permitted her to move to New York and launch herself by performing short pieces before rowdy crowds at the Pyramid, the Cat Club, and Palladium. She is troubled that early support such as hers may be disappearing for the new generation of artists.

At alternative spaces like The Kitchen in New York and on nationwide tours, Finley began doing longer pieces such as "I'm an Ass Man," a scathing critique of the power of male desire to "colonize" the female. Her medium is her voice and body, and nudity is crucial to her work in general. Like a live model in an art class, she defetishizes and de-sexualizes the body.

Always seeking ways to reach audiences outside the white cube of the gallery, and to reach audiences beyond those who attend avant-garde theater, she recorded albums of her work set to dance music, including a collaboration with Sinéad O'Connor, appeared in a film by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and played Tom Hanks's doctor in *Philadelphia*. Increasingly she has performed her pieces in prime venues throughout the U.S. and in Europe, Australia, and South America. In 1992 she premiered *A Certain Level of Denial* at the Serious Fun Festival at Lincoln Center in New York. Later that summer she brought the piece to Provincetown, appearing in Town Hall before a full house and leaving the audience trembling for days from the ultrasound of her projected feeling. She began naked, wearing only a hat, and speaking in a meek voice. Slowly, over the course of the performance, she clothed herself, article by article. Gradually, across the narratives of five linked pieces, the syllables of her voice grew in power as undulating patterns of emotion emerged from incantations, laments, sobs, scolds, tantrums, ritualized rants, plaintive wailings, and an audible gnash-

*Chris, put the gun down
and get the nipple clamps out of
the freezer*





Can you mail that into my
litter a little slower & harder
Christopher Robin?

ing of teeth. It seemed I was witnessing the emergence of a new category for aesthetic judgment, the bone-marrow test. She reminded us that if an artist hasn't got passion, no matter what else they have, they haven't got much.

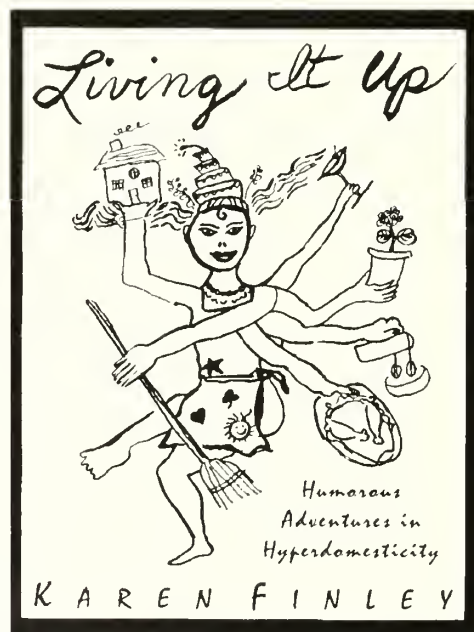
A provocateur, not an entertainer, Finley has a way of attacking the prejudices that hobble some of us, like a kind of arthritis that limits but is not disabling. She enacts a postmodern form of Aristotelian catharsis: she irradiates an audience with volts of fear and waves of pity. Her high levels of intensity are counterpointed in performance by a minor persona, a fragile, domestic woman, speaking in a timid, questioning, even impotent voice. Present within her, vying for expression, are both a savage woman and a hollowed-out housewife. Occasionally she also invokes male voices.

Born in Chicago in 1956, Finley attended Catholic and public schools and joined the radical ranks in the nearby college town of Evanston, involving herself with the Punks for Peace movement. In the late '70s, her father shot himself and died. She saw that when the artist Chris Burden shot himself, he made art out of his wound. To her, more shocking than personal tragedies, even her father's suicide, were larger situations—homelessness, the AIDS crisis, wars—themes that drive her work.

Utilizing her voice, a few props, and fewer clothes, Finley works in an experimental genre that can be confused with theater. Trained as a visual artist, with an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute, she got her first NEA grant for Emerging Artists in New Genres in 1983. Often she incorporates her own "static" work—bluntly urgent drawings and paintings of thickly outlined figures, scratched with legends such as "God is a woman"—into her live performances, sometimes showing slides in huge scale on a stage scrim, creating ceremonial environments that animate her various voices. She does not project herself into a role written by someone else, but rather projects herself into roles she has written for voiceless souls on the margins of society, seeking to validate feelings of the repressed or oppressed. Her performances would be acting if someone else could do them, which, to her, would be like having another artist do one's painting.

Finley speaks of her writing, in contrast to her performances, as "removing my body from

my work." Many of her writings and prose poems are related to her performance pieces, a kind of spoken writing, but the writing is not a text of the performances. One of her spoken pieces, "The Black Sheep," was cast on a bronze plaque embedded in a black rock in a park for the homeless on the Bowery. Commemorating the dispossessed, it reads with brisker cadences, more anger, and as much love for humanity as Walt Whitman. This and other poetry and prose is collected in her book *Shock Treatment*, published in 1990 by City Lights, the San Francisco press which published *Howl*. Finley, who read Ginsberg's *cri de coeur* in 1969 when she was 13, is gratified that her own howl is added to the mainly male list of Beat poets. *Enough Is Enough*, published by Simon and Schuster in 1993, mimics the genre of meditation and self-help books, which Finley began reading in the wake of the NEA conflict. Her topsy-turvy instructions make



a lot of sense. For example, she points out that guilt is normal, that only sociopaths do not feel guilt, and that guilt accompanies all good things, from sex to ice cream. She shows the value of meditating on the dysfunctional and how such mindfulness can lead us to link the marginal to the mainstream.

Her most recent work, *The American Chestnut*, utilizes the idea that the American Chestnut, a tree blighted by a disease that prevents it from reaching maturity, casts its shadow on the American housewife who strives to garden and entertain with the unattainable perfection of Martha Stewart. This is also the subject of her latest book, *Living It Up: Humorous Adventures in Hyperdomesticity*, to be published by Doubleday in October. The American housewife is a woman with six arms, one each for sweeping, cooking, baking, gardening, hostessing, and holding the household together. Finley once said that the way to have power as a woman was to act like a man. I wonder, if enough women do this, perhaps in another two centuries it will dawn on men that the way to have power is to act like a woman.

Christopher Busa: This winter I was surprised to read an article about your latest book contract on the front page of the business section of the *New York Times*. They took it seriously as a business story. Maybe it turned out well for you in the long run, since you got to keep the first advance from Crown and sell it again to Doubleday.

Karen Finley: When Crown decided not to publish *Living It Up*, because it offended Martha Stewart, I was disappointed. It set a precedent for publishing houses that said they can't have two opposing views under one roof, especially if one point of view earns less income than the other. They go with the more established author. At first my book was considered funny, a humor book, a parody. But on closer examination the book criticizes how women spend their days and the fact that the only place a woman can exercise creative dominion or power or decision-making is in the safe haven of domestic territory. When I critique that, the whole world caves in. We've seen similar things happen to more famous public figures, like Hillary with the baking cookies line, a simple sentence, but the whole world caved in and she's never gotten over it. That was the beginning of the end for her. She made a comment criticizing how women spent their day, and that was it. The fact that I make fun of or parody that is very threatening. It goes beyond a financial decision. It was fine at first. The attractiveness of me going with Crown, as they presented it to me, was that they published Martha Stewart and the type of genre I was parodying. I was to have access to the designers and the knowledge Crown had. People at the top of the company knew of it. They had told Martha Stewart's editors. It had been in the *New York Times* that I was doing this. Then a man decided not to do it. I don't know if Martha Stewart knew or not, but Martha Stewart certainly didn't say she thought this was censorship. She certainly hasn't gotten upset about it.

CB: Has she made any comments at all?

KF: She said it just isn't her business. She didn't deal with the business situations. That's how women have been taught. They are not supposed to have political thought. I think Martha Stewart is our first lady. That's why everybody is so into her. The way she's blonde, the way she looks and handles herself. Her work becomes an overgrowth, like a cancer out of control, beyond what she attempts to do. She's trying to introduce creativity into women's lives, and I wanted to parody this misuse of power.

CB: As a creative homemaker.

KF: She's smart, she went to Barnard, she has credentials. What they'd really like for Hillary Clinton is to disguise that. Martha Stewart has all the education, but she decided to stay home and bake cookies. That's why the country's all behind her. They are with the woman who has decided to stay home and bake cookies, and who has the education, and who has made money from it. I find it gross, like a tobacco company, a really bad bill of goods.

CB: A legal corruption, part of the fabric of society and sanctioned. Making quilts is like baking cookies. You saw the patchwork quilt Jenny Humphreys did where the word "cunt" is stitched into each square. She took a safe idiom, the quilt made at home before the hearth, and she used it to make a powerful statement.

KF: That piece brings up the idea of the offended. At one point this artist was called this word, and it deeply affected her. In the history of the quilt, women would put meaning in each square, using scraps of clothing their family had worn. It was the only place where a woman could get this information out. A quilt is traditionally woman's work. Using the quilt as a canvas frees that word of its power. Good art transforms pain into some compassionate attempt to understand it. I haven't talked to Jenny Humphreys, but I think she's getting people to feel the horror she felt. You get that feeling of pain when you go in front of the Vietnam Memorial. In Syracuse there is a memorial to the plane crash in Scotland—statues of women looking up to the sky, crying. They're supposed to be mothers. You can hardly look at it, it's so deep and emotional. There are things that are hard to live with, but it's important to have them present. There are very important civil rights photos. With Mapplethorpe, you have the flowers and the XYZ work. It's important to have both.

CB: In a free society people are going to be offended just by the nature of freedom. People wonder why they should be offended. They are like Jesse Helms and want to make it against the law to offend them.

KF: Right. So you're offended. You don't like something. Everything in our society is supposed to be immediate and gratifying. People think if they do some sort of exercise, they can control things. I don't think there's anything wrong with being offended. I see movies I don't necessarily like and I will examine the reason something offends me, but I don't want to get rid of it. We live in a thinking culture, and we get the shadow of the opposite, which is feeling. Just because a person has a psychology they haven't processed doesn't mean that other people have their experience. I also have no problem with bad taste. Bad taste is okay.

CB: Since becoming a mother, you've been reading a lot of children's books. Do you feel you've been torn away from the hot issues of the art world by the text you are reading to your daughter?

KF: No. It's brought my eyes open. If there is a girl, she's usually by herself. It's rare to have females who are equal. In Beatrix Potter, the fe-

males are only mothers. Jemima Puddle Duck is trying to lay an egg. Growing up, Captain Kangaroo, no females, Sesame Street, no females, except Miss Piggy, and she's not even on Sesame Street. It's okay for girls to identify and look at males for models, but boys in this culture are denied access to females. They can never fantasize about wanting to be a female. Little girls can look at men and think, I'd like to be a doctor, but little boys don't look at female role models and think they would like to be like that person without it being taboo.

CB: Your daughter Violet is now two years old. She seems very well adjusted. How does an artist care for a child?

KF: She seems wonderful. I've been very conscious of the horrors in the artist's family caused by creative life. There is a fear that artists create a destructive world for people connected to them. The men chose to leave and the women chose family. My grandmother had an incredible singing voice. She headed in the direction of an opera career and decided not to pursue it because she wanted a family. She made a choice. People in our culture have either suffered from having the artist in the family, and struggled with that myth, or they have decided to be stereotypical good people and not listen to their inside, suffering for the rest of their lives.

CB: If the nature of reality for many people is hell, are you saying you wish it weren't that way?

KF: Yes, I don't think it has to be that way. I have a problem with the machismo sense of the artist. To me, it began with Gauguin. He had to make that choice about leaving his family and going to Tahiti. He couldn't be creative in France in his family structure, but he could in a primitive place. I have a lot of problems with that, and with the super-artist, whether it's Picasso, and he—mostly it's been "he"—embodies creativity for all of us, like a voice from God. We look and stare at their art. We stare at their madness, their willingness to risk all in their personal life, and go through alcohol and women, to come up with this oil painting. In some ways it's humorous. I mean, it's just a painting. Yet the artist has to embody some ceremony. Their personal life must be deep and hectic and they must be doing it for us. It's a weird archetype we've made.

CB: You are not a male artist—maybe that has made you free.

KF: A lot of male artists are changing, too. One reason the far right is so against the artist, right now, is that artists are integrating.

CB: Isn't that the thing, that artists now stand for sanity and health?

KF: Besides the madness that artists were supposed to embody, for many years artists only came out of affluence. I just came back from Brazil, where I really felt the difference between low and high art, for lack of a better term, or folk art as opposed to art that comes from some European reference. When I went to the museums, there was no one there—very few visitors. That was interesting to me. It got me thinking about how art wasn't doing its job in Brazil. The wealthy, the businesses, try to have a European form. I haven't been there for the Bial, but what I saw wasn't happening. I went to a sculpture park. There was no one there. But go to a park downtown, there are over 1000 people, much activity. That made me think of art in everyday life. People should be able to value what they do as art, whether they spend 15 minutes or live the Western notion that in order to be an artist work has to be nonstop, no sleep, 15 hours, draining one's soul to get to something. A size element goes along with it. I question that. It makes art very lonely, makes it so certain people can't do art. When I was pregnant, I saw how art was valued by length of time and that was connected to how I felt about art in Brazil.

CB: The populace there was participating in the pleasure of making things in little pockets of time, and that's the important thing to focus on?

KF: Braiding a child's hair is a beautiful sculpture. Setting a table. We have a value system that isolates people from being a participant in creative life, because it can't be acknowledged or recognized that everyday life is creative. That makes you feel less valuable. A woman with her vanity table, with all her things around, that's art-making.

CB: A huge amount of life takes place domestically, and if that's excluded, art is less. In fact, your new piece, *American Chestnut*, is performed through the character of a housewife. As I hear the voice in your performances, I think, "Who is speaking?" Very often there is a dialogue, for example, in *A Certain Level of Denial*, between a female patient and a white, male psychiatrist. They are distinguished by vocabulary, intensity, point of view, but essentially I feel you are pulling from different parts of your personality. Sometimes you do this very quickly, shifting from being the oppressor to being a victim, from being a leper to being a person calling someone a leper. Are you conscious of that?

KF: I think it's unconscious, but when I look at it I can explain it.

CB: The last poem of *Shock Treatment*, "The Black Sheep," was placed as a piece of public sculpture in a forsaken area of the East Village. You wrote that even if black sheep are outsiders in their own family, they can be family to strangers. Are you a black sheep or are you merely speaking for black sheep?

KF: Recently I feel like a black sheep. "The Black Sheep" came about from reading religious texts.





"THE BLACK SHEEP"

I began to think that "The Lord Is My Shepherd" is not my prayer. I wanted to write a new prayer, "The Black Sheep." In it was the idea that you do not ever feel you fit in. It could be the artist, it could be the lower class. Their struggle connected them to other black sheep. That is the family. You realize this pain. I think that's an important prayer, having that realization and that acceptance. I have an image at the end, "silence at the end of the phone," which is about the attempt to have a conversation with a family member or someone that you feel is supposed to love you, and they never do. In our life certain people never love you, although you love them and they're supposed to love you.

CB: I can see how you might see yourself as a black sheep, but you don't focus on yourself, you focus on many other black sheep. What is remarkable is the range of sympathy in your imagination.

KF: If I have anything that's happened to me I just use that, turning whatever pain I have into being more compassionate to others. Imaginative sympathy, I don't think is that hard. It was very difficult to see the poverty, the visible suffering, in Brazil. When I was performing I started breaking down and telling the people I didn't know how they could endure all the poverty.

CB: What piece did you do there?

KF: *A Certain Level of Denial*. They want me to come back. I'm going to do a public sculpture, an installation. I'll do something with the poverty.

CB: You are making visual art, you are writing your own performance texts, poetry and prose, and you are performing or acting. How are you finding your center? Is it through the writing, is it through the image, is it through the feeling or the action of acting?

KF: It's like being in a garden and visiting the different parts of the garden. You have to have some flowers that grow in the shady part, you have to have some that grow in the sunny part. Like a conceptual artist, I always come up with a concept first, then I try to think of what structure suits my idea. Sometimes I will be doing visual elements and then, while I'm doing the visuals, the writing comes along with it. I'm a fairly slow writer. Ideas come quickly, and I work every day, but I look for something else besides working from nine to five. I don't force it, although I was schooled in a painting tradition

where you're supposed to stay in the studio until something happens. You don't leave till something does. Like a jail.

CB: In sports they say, "No pain, no gain."

KF: It is like sports. I guess the reason I could never play sports was that I was not very competitive. I am not a competitive person. I liked the physicality of sports, but the idea of winning was uncomfortable for me. Men are trained, or it's in their genes. I get bored easily. When I first started performing in theaters, I felt I was appropriating a theatrical structure. I get into a problem with a medium when I start to entertain the idea that I should be taken seriously in that medium. When I did music, I never thought of myself as a rock-and-roll person, but I was appropriating the form of dance music. Once I start thinking I'm going to be doing it seriously, it falls apart. One reason I wanted to publish my book, *Shock Treatment*, with City Lights was because of their tradition of male Beat poets. I wanted to have a woman in the back with their listings. I've done that book, but I don't feel now I'm writing Beat poetry. With *Enough Is Enough*, I appropriated the medium of self-help books.

CB: In what genre did you see yourself writing in *Shock Treatment*?

KF: All my performance pieces, I think, are a type of poetry. I won't say the model was performance texts, because I don't give any explanations. I do that purposely. When you read a play, there's a distancing, and I wanted my book to be more immediate, the way I was moved, transformed, by reading early books like *Howl* and Ferlinghetti and Beat work when I was 13 years old. Everything I read then was male-based on an unconscious level. I wanted to contribute a feminine position.

CB: What are you reading now?

KF: A lot of facts, rather than expressive stuff. I read biographies. Right now I'm reading cookbooks. In my new book I take the pursuit of an unattainable domesticity that you see in Martha Stewart.

CB: If I were Martha Stewart, I'd be quaking in my Wellingtons. How many lawsuits do you have going now?

KF: I think I have five lawsuits, all involved with my art. Meanwhile, I can't wait to paint my dining room, to try to make it more like a tiki room. I think men feel this too.

CB: I love nestbuilding.

KF: I wrote *Living it Up* for men too. I feel I can't be taken seriously and given respect in the outside world, but within the home I can. That's where women can actually have their creativity. There's this hyper-domesticity, and a need for it, even by professional women who resort to it perhaps because they have come to a glass ceiling. In Marcia Clark or Hillary Clinton we've seen this. It's also kind of gross and extravagant to be making things with hydrangeas and dried macaroni with what's going on in Bosnia. It's like Nero playing the violin. The country is falling apart while people have a preoccupation with

things fleeting and time-consuming. The positive side is the making of things. I didn't put this in *American Chestnut*, but I originally had a makeover of Hillary, showing her what she should do. She would have to be on the cover of *Good Housekeeping*, not *Harper's* or the *Atlantic Monthly*. Talking about child care is good, but talking about cookies is where it's at.

CB: Your voice in performance has an incantatory way of gaining momentum. You work the material until it becomes kneaded and shaped and understood.

KF: I shift a lot. I have conversations with myself and take one position, then another. I like to analyze and I love hindsight. I also like to look at omens, things speaking to me that aren't about language. If I come out of a meeting and something happens synchronistically, that's important to me.

CB: If the whistle blows at noon when you start your car.

KF: Yes, I look at that as important information for telling me what's really happening, an indicator, rather than an intellectual process, like synchronicity.

CB: We need to get some sense of what drove you to become a performance artist. You got your MFA in '82, but you had started performing earlier in 1979, before you got your MFA. I wanted to ask you about your father's suicide, if that's not an off topic.

KF: No.

CB: He committed suicide in 1978 and you began performing shortly afterwards?

KF: I had been doing performances since puberty, early teens, and happenings in high school, and going to the San Francisco Art Institute. So it was part of my language, though I wasn't sophisticated. I was reading *Artforum* about the things at the Kitchen. I'd read about Chris Burden and Vito Acconci. I was interested in artists who were doing happening type of work.

CB: Allen Kaprow?

KF: Very much so. His early work seemed wild. When I was in high school, around 14, I would take on individual quests, quietly done. I would sit on a train and write to the person next to me. I would let the letter sit there and see what they would do.

CB: Would you leave it there when you left?

KF: No, I would leave it on my lap. I would write, "Dear lady in the blue coat sitting next to me." People could be physically touching each other but have no communication. I would go in front of restaurant windows, while people were eating, and start having fits. I was interested in doing fits. I quit a job, telling them extraordinary personal information that wasn't true. I was curious about people saying they were interested in you when they were not really interested.

CB: What kind of outlandish thing did you say—that you were born in an orphanage?

KF: I told them I was pregnant. Once I pretended I had an epileptic seizure while I was a waitress. At the time, people did outlandish things. I lived in a town, Evanston, home of Northwestern University. I'd been in two riots or demonstrations. I was active in the peace movement, civil rights, all the different movements that were going on. I was outlandish in the way I dressed. I wore costumes. I came dressed as a tree. I was active at being a young person, definitely an individual. You see me now, but I was more flamboyant at that age.

CB: I read an interview you did eight years ago with David Ross and Trevor Fairbrother in which you speak about your father's jazz playing and him beating the drums and going into a trance, and you going into a trance listening to him. It made me think of the elaborate conversation you have going between the various parts of yourself, each taking different positions, and sometimes only appearing as fragments of voices, mixtures of voices. It would be wonderful to imagine you as existing in a free state, witness to your own uncensored mental activity. I suppose I am trying to say that there is something mediumistic about the way you work, the way you allow yourself to function as a conduit for a lot of emotional energy.

KF: Well, I worked as a psychic, professionally. I also feel that the performance I did here in Provincetown, *A Certain Level of Denial*—in that piece I am definitely visited by spirits. Things happen on stage that are unexplained. I feel very strong about the medium aspect. Sometimes I do automatic writing, sometimes I have visitations. I do feel I am a medium. I stopped doing that professionally because I couldn't do my art and also work as a psychic. When you talk about the jazz or the trance aspect and the connection to voices, I can say that several things got me interested in voices. When I was about 12 years old I had this incredible slumber party at my house. Witnessing the Chicago Democratic Convention and the riot that happened afterwards, the police attacking the demonstrators—seeing that live on television—had a tremendous effect on me. Having the Chicago Seven trial happen. Abbie Hoffman, Bobbie Seals, William Kunstler, made you think about how art was a communication of ideas, more important than the decorative. That had a big effect on me. Also, speakers. I remember being moved by the speaker when we would go to demonstrations or rallies, that being a moment when everyone knew what they were there for and the speaker bringing the passion together. There are speakers that all of us know, whether it's King or Jesse Jackson or Kennedy, incredible speakers.

CB: I hadn't thought of that connection of performance to speeches at political rallies. In making a distinction between performances and actions, Peter Hutchinson told me that he doesn't do performances, but he does do actions, meaning that the performance is done before an audience while an action is done in solitary activity or with a single assistant. I think it is a pretty useful idea.

KF: I think that is a useful idea.

CB: I would like to find some language to describe the feeling I have, watching you perform, that I am observing not a theatrical performance, so much as a private action.

KF: What I do is ceremony. It would be acting if someone else could do my performances. People ask me, and it makes me reluctant to publish my work because people feel they can do someone's performance, which to me is like someone saying, "Oh, can I do your painting?" Coming from the late '70s and doing performance work, I understand that distinction with the action. I first started doing actions where there would be few people and I would document them, but what happened was I made a conscious decision that I wanted to present work—and I'm going to use the word conceptual, I'm going to use the word avant-garde, you know, experimental—to the mass public. The person in the grocery store did not know what conceptual performances were. I wanted a language that had an effect on mainstream culture. I don't want to change so much that I have my work on HBO. I'm probably a step closer to HBO than Joseph Beuys is, but I'm still not on HBO. He is closer to PBS than me. I want to do my new piece, *American Chestnut*, in a white space.

CB: A white cube?

KF: Yes, like a gallery rather than a black box, which is more theater. I am concerned that people think performance is something that's like comedy. That's why I want to pull back. Another reason is that the art institutions in this country, and even in the world, have not supported action artists. I haven't talked to Chris Burden, but he's doing sculpture now. Vito Acconci is doing sculpture. These artists weren't supported. And I don't get asked to do things by too many museums. I'd like to do my performance work in museums. Overall, you don't see new genre or expanded forms promoted by the art world and the art magazines and the critics. I've been lucky. I get a lot of good reviews, but I can lose, especially with my new piece. It won't catch on if you have just worked with theater. When I was squirting milk out from my breasts, I was trying to do an abstract painting like Pollock in that famous film.

CB: The Hans Namuth film?

don't look at me
like that Polk, you give me a lover



KF: Yes. Those are the references with it. So it's difficult and that's a reason why.

CB: Pollock said, "I am nature."

KF: I am nature, too!

CB: I was just thinking that.

KF: That's hysterical. I'll remember to use that with the Christian Coalition.

CB: There's the story of when Hofmann came to Pollock's studio, looked at the work, and said, "You don't paint from nature." And Pollock said with utter devastation, "I am nature."

KF: Oooh, I'm going to say that.

CB: Nudity is natural. When you did your show in Provincetown in 1992, Sergeant Anthony, now Chief of Police, called me up and said he'd heard there was going to be nudity. I gave him press clippings from the *New York Times* about your performance of the same piece in New York at Lincoln Center. They confirmed his suspicions, and he said, "Where can I get tickets?"

KF: That's this town!

CB: What protects you is having a socially redeeming aspect.

KF: It's protected me up to a point. But in defense of women who put dildos inside themselves for an act, I think that should be protected, too. I'm interested in challenging some laws. When I was in Chicago my show was stopped because of the nudity. They want to stop nudity in places which have liquor licenses, because they want to stop strip shows. People have a problem with sex. I think sex is good. I think sex is healthy. I will fight for sex shows. My work is more about the violence to women, but I'm concerned as a person who's for the First Amendment. I was banned from performing in London for 10 years because my work, as a straight woman, promoted buggery. They also had a law that a woman couldn't talk and be nude. They used that law, indiscriminately, for me. That's the problem with these laws.

CB: I think it should be allowed to be self-limiting. If people don't want to see an act they don't have to see it. Nudity is very important to your work, a statement of total, open self-presentation, a vulnerability that is strong by having nothing to hide. The core of what you are doing is displaying the force of your passion. So I'm looking for an origin for the passion. And I am led to the suicide of your father.

KF: Since I love biographies, I, if I were reading a biography, would like that too. We feel things must have an origin. But I know that I had this certain kind of passion before my father died. What his death did give to me was the idea of a deep pain. A lot of people have a fear of death. Before I had a child, there was a great fear in me, an imagined fear that something would go wrong. I went through it. You go through something, then you're so low. Emotionally, when my father died, I lost everything.

CB: The family lost everything?

KF: I guess the family lost everything, but everything there was lost for me. Nothing had any meaning. Everything has a different value after death. Nothing has a material value in the same way it did before. With hindsight, I mean, my father is a murderer. Suicide is an incredible, violent act. It's hard to think that this was his choice, that whatever his pain was inside, this was a better choice. I am just beginning to be able to imagine that. I think the healthy human is always trying to go into the mindset of the other person and look at the reasons. And you never come up with an answer.

CB: Do you think perhaps your father didn't express his rage and anger and did this to himself and that your rage is to never be repressed, as a result of that example, and to do the opposite?

KF: I recognized I had talent, and I felt that it was a responsibility to use it, because there were members of my family that couldn't use their talents, couldn't make that choice. I made that choice. I knew from a young age that I would make that choice. I could feel unhappiness. With my father, I don't think there was a rage in him. I think there was a deep sadness. I have heard that many times depression is about unsurfaced rage, but I have never thought about it. The problem I have is that some of those myths are the same idea, like Picasso being born during an earthquake. Society says that in order to get expression, something bad or traumatic had to happen. I had something bad happen, but I also had incredible support. I lived in an area that really supported me as an artist.

CB: In Evanston?

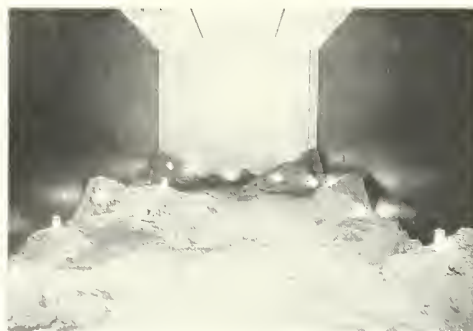
KF: Yes. Evanston was where I went to high school. I was really supported in my vision. But the reason I don't believe the myth about trauma in the artist's life is that everyone close to suicide or poor, and every bum on the street, would then be an artist, and that isn't the situation. What the realer situation is, is support. Everyone has bad things happen to them, but not everyone has good things. I had enough good things happen in support of my work that made me capable of continuing.

CB: You tend to focus on surviving, rather than being victimized.

KF: Events happen to us, but support carries us.

CB: This is why that NEA battle must have been a true bad thing for you, because it's a pointed denial of support, a withholding of support already awarded, and therefore a symbolic statement of rejection.

KF: It's a very symbolic thing for me. It still gets me upset. Now I'm more upset there are no individual artist grants. The next generation will not get the support I had. I came from a working class background, and the only reason I was able to get into the arts was by getting that first initial grant from the NEA and getting to New York to do some work. You get that first push in those little spaces, but I'm hearing of so many



"WRITTEN IN SAND"

presses and little theaters closing. Art is becoming more and more extinct.

CB: To return to the nudity. It's very important to you. It's a feature of all your performances. What do you associate with the topic?

KF: One of my favorite things to do is life drawing. Drawing the nude was considered an adult activity. You looked at the nude and you looked at the body. It wasn't a sexual activity. It was an art activity, anatomy. Of course, in some of my installations, I am concerned with the power of looking. And then I, being a nude, am like the art. There are many layers to it. It's a costume.

CB: Nudity is a costume?

KF: Yes, I look at it as costume. In *American Chestnut*, in the last scene, I just have an apron on, and you see some of the body peering through. I wanted that. I walk like an animal on all fours—I did that image first as a drawing, a sketch, almost like Romulus, the wolf with the breasts and the babies underneath. It's a powerful image to me and it feels really stupid to wear something like a leotard. You put a costume on and immediately it focuses in on a time. Once you take the clothes off, there's no time association, there's no '50s, there's no '60s, there's no '70s. There is only my age.

CB: There is an aura to the nude body, a radiance we're not conscious of when we're clothed.

KF: The nude body is also more animal. I like, in this piece, the animal quality of the human without the artifice of female clothing. Female clothing suggests so much. I use the apron. I start out with a wedding dress, turned around so it has a very low cleavage and I have this dress trailing in front of me. Those are costumes. I am going to have a show in California at the Museum of Contemporary Art, in three rooms, called "Go Figure." It's going to be a commentary on censorship and the fear of offending. There may be no difference. In one room I will have Greek sculptures with phallic symbols projected in video-like dreams on their genitalia—cigars, a Camel ad, the Chrysler Building, for the male, and for the female, a purse, a cave, a shark's mouth, a flower. There will be a sculpture with its penis knocked off, and I will have representations of the penis in gilded cages or behind black curtains or in front of velvet robes. With some work Mapplethorpe would put rope in front or some photos would be but behind curtains at exhibitions, and that tends to eroticize or fetishize his work. I'm going to be fetishizing some of my work. I'm also going to be showing

symbols of the penis. In the second room I will have an internet piece in which people will be invited to type into a computer what offends them, and their words will be projected onto a fountain of water. Another room will be life drawing. You go in and there's just life drawing, happening, with a model there all the time.

CB: The show will be an actual life drawing class?

KF: A life drawing class, up all the time. There'll be a nude model all the time and people viewing the drawing can also draw the model. I will also be dealing with the fear of offending, where people can put on the internet anything that offends them. You will write down what offends you. You can get into the show in your own home at your own internet address, so people can add into it.

CB: I love the participatory exhibitions you've done, like "Written on Sand," where you ask the viewer to write in sand spread on the gallery floor the names of those they want to remember who have died of AIDS. You're a performance artist, but you do these exhibitions from time to time that encourage the audience to become a performer.

KF: That's what I like about the life drawing class, where people can draw figures. It takes away the myth of being an artist. You just see the body there and you do not look at the body in the same way. That's a great feeling to give people, that opportunity to draw. I love life drawing. It's one of my favorite things to do.

CB: Your most recent participatory idea is a phone line.

KF: I am developing a phone line to make into a public work, 1-800-ARTISTS. We would put the number on billboards, in subways, in ads in newspapers. It would be an opportunity to hear the inspired soul of a real live artist, her op-eds, advice, experiences, monologues, and art jokes, using uncensored, raw language. You don't know what she is going to say next. You can listen to her struggle with society, making work against great odds. Since the funding for artists is vanishing, the best thing to do may be to market artists in the same marketplace as a sex worker. ■

Christopher Busa is editor of Provincetown Arts.

CONFUSED? NEED IMAGINATION? NEED TO GET OUT OF THE DOLDRUMS? DON'T LIKE THE WAY YOU LIVE? DRESS? THINK? NEED NEW THOUGHTS? DON'T COMPLAIN ENOUGH? NEED TO BE SHOCKED? NEED LISTENING SHILLS? A LITTLE BIT TOO STRAIGHT? LIKE THINGS THAT DON'T MATCH? A DAYDREAMER? BECOME ARTIST FARTSY? LEARN TO USE WORDS LIKE Juxtapose AND APPROPRIATE AND DECONSTRUCT AND I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT BUT IT'S ART! GET A NEW OUTLOOK ON LIFE! CALL NOW / 800-ARTISTS!

Black Sequins, Black Feathers: Reading Musty Chiffon

BY MARK DOTY

1. In the Downtown Night

It's late March, the mirrored back room of a piano bar in the West Village, the sort of downtown *boîte* that somehow manages to be both glossy and tacky at once, which is not the least part of its charm. My friend Robert and I have threaded our way through a dense crowd to make it to the back room. We fit ourselves into one of the banquettes that circle the room on three sides, facing the simple, smallish stage—just room for a piano, a mike, and one generously proportioned chanteuse.

Soon there's a piano arpeggio, a flickering and shimmer of the lights, and then, from the dark at the back of the room materializes the song-sparrow in question. Miss Musty Chiffon is a sort of fountain of black sequins and feathers, her scale and drama and shiny darkness heightened by a high black wig, and gloves, and Amazonian eyelashes fluttering like some huge nocturnal butterfly of the rainforest. No writer would approach the description of such a figure without some trepidation, for Chiffon is an invitation to excess; she is fountain, butterfly, bird—a magnificent, over-the-top raven? (Suddenly I'm thinking of the Chilean writer José Donoso's novel, *The Obscene Bird of Night*. And of Musty's own early publicity slogan: "The circus came to town and left something behind.")

She launches into a representative number from her repertoire of rather *louche* songs of the late '60s and early '70s, Steppenwolf's "Magic Carpet Ride," a song I can honestly say I have not thought of once since losing track of my Steppenwolf albums sometime in the mid-'70s: *Come on along with me, little girl, on a magic carpet ride*. Musty does not lipsynch, but employs her own voice—a frankly male voice, with a certain androgynous tinge in the alto—to a particularly gripping effect.

What strikes me most is the way that her performance inspires the audience to two seemingly contradictory feelings. First, she is very funny—the unlikely songs, the vocabulary of lounge-act gestures and patter; second, she makes us anxious. Well, she makes me anxious, anyway, and I am pretty certain that this is an experience I share with much of Musty's audience. Isn't there a nervous edge to this laughter, a detectable ripple of something unsettled not too far beneath the surface of these laughs?

There are many qualities unique to Musty Chiffon's performance (more on that later), but this is not one of them; most drag queens are, to one degree or another, both funny and scary. Why should this be the case?

The answer to this question, I believe, brings us close to the heart of any sort of performance,



MUSTY CHIFFON BY JACK PIERSON

because our puzzling combination of amusement and anxiety has to do with the pesky relationship between the performer and what is performed, between—in the plainest terms—*being* and *seeming*. The questions raised, and played with, and pushed into our faces (drag queens, seemingly by nature, like to be "in your face") have to do with who we are and what we wear, and how we wear who we are. And when we wear something else, are we someone else?

2. Drag Theory 101

The art of drag is founded on shared knowledge: we know she's a man, *she* knows she's a man. Yet the visual evidence suggests otherwise, and in this delicious gap between what we know and what we see lies the realm of possibility which drag explores.

(I am dealing specifically with men in dresses here, for several reasons. First, women in drag are less frequent, despite the emergence of "drag-kings" in recent years. Women have, to a degree, cultural permission to cross-dress, and a woman performing in men's clothes has a different sort of relation to mainstream culture. Think of Dietrich singing in her tuxedo, for instance; her transgressive behavior is eroticized, displayed for the enjoyment of heterosexual men, much as straight pornography eroticizes lesbian sex. There is no such equivalent for male crossdressers, whose behavior tends to be anathema to many heterosexual men; drag queens, at least in public, are comic figures, not erotic ones.)

Drag gives the lie to the notion that gender determines behavior. Culture teaches our eyes to see the body as the determining factor in who

we are and what we do, but even the simplest sort of drag show—a man in a gown and wig lipsynching to records—points to the richness and complexity of our possibilities. Drag calls the relation between body and persona into question, and reminds us that being male equals a proscribed code of appearance and behavior. We make, inevitably, a whole set of assumptions based upon the gendered nature of a particular body, and drag's work is to ironize and destabilize these assumptions.

Since all drag says—some more loudly than others—"I am not what I seem to be," there is a quality of risk about it, a heightening of the difference between actuality and perceived reality. Drag invites us to ask ourselves what's true. There are, broadly speaking, two sorts of drag performers: those who work to make illusion seamless; and those who play with the tension between illusion and reality, acknowledging—as part of the show—what's really under the make-up and gowns. Two Provincetown drag *artistes* illustrate my point.

I'll begin with Tish de Williams. She—I cannot bring myself to call a drag queen "he," and I trust the reader will bear with a blur of pronouns—is a heavyish black man in his 40s. Made up with dark red lips and an appropriate wig, she looks particularly great in the role of a mature black woman singer like Patti LaBelle or Pearl Bailey. Her signature and triumph is a performance of Della Reese's "You've Come A Long Way from St. Louis" (a recording of which, by the way, a group of Missouri frat boys once mailed to T.S. Eliot). Gowned in a long red dress with horizontal bands of dangling golden fringe, Tish vamps up the number, in which the mightily offended Ms. Reese gives someone (a lover? a female rival?) a serious dressing down: "You come a long way from St. Louis / But this is New York City and girl / You got a long way to go." This is a supreme tune of "throwing shade." The extraordinary moment in this performance is the bridge of the song, a galumphing passage that goes: "Well I've got news for you, / I'm from Missouri too."

Tish does this bit by going to the back of the stage, spreading her legs, and strutting forward in such a way as to make every inch of fringe on her large red and gold frame shimmy like crazy. I've seen this three times, and every time the audience has gone wild, standing up and applauding, laughing joyously. It's a triumphant moment of celebration—sort of like dancing on the grave of everybody who's ever wronged you. Tish becomes the powerful black matriarch,

marching out her authority, shaking her stuff in a way that nobody's going to top. She transcends not one identity but two—suddenly he's no longer a man in a dress, and no longer marginalized as a black man or a black "woman." She's a star, who's made the piece totally her own. She looks utterly pleased at the crowd's delight.

Like most drag queens, Tish behaves in ways which covertly acknowledge the audience's awareness of her "real identity." She winks, casts the occasional skeptical look at her own "breasts," and makes a particularly funny facial gesture at members of the audience, "reading" them. To be "read" means to be seen for what you are, and not favorably; it's a visual gesture which translates into "And *who* are you to criticize what I'm doing?" On another level, it means, "Are you any less a fake than me? Or am I just better at performing?" It anticipates and deflects criticism, subverting the audience's judgment of the drag queen almost before it happens; it's a particularly complex gesture because the drag queen invites us to look at her and then seems to criticize us, albeit playfully, for doing so. We enjoy the performance (and my impression is that almost everyone does enjoy these performances, gay or straight, men or women, even if you think you won't like them or don't really like the idea of them) in part because we are in on the secret. This is an elaborate ritual of concealment, designed to disguise what everyone already knows. Sometimes the interest, as in Tish's case, lies in the self-conscious or ironic acknowledgment of the ways in which the illusion fails. Yet her ritualistic dance of triumph in "You've Come A Long Way from St. Louis" is a transcendent moment because we suddenly believe her—or rather we participate in the joy of her becoming, however briefly, the star she intends to be, the star she's always known she was.

If Tish's performance is built on acknowledging the failure of illusion, Billie Jean's drag work is built on an attempt to make illusion seamless. She is a white man, 30-something, with pale skin and long blonde hair of her own. She likes to wear black, and favors revealing outfits, which is unusual for drag queens since the covered body offers far more opportunities for padding. I wouldn't say Billie Jean looks like a woman (what does it mean to look like a woman?) but she doesn't look like your standard-issue drag, either. She favors ballads, songs of love lost, of women wronged, neglected, mistreated. Her performance is all simmering rage, and it's curiously uncomfortable to watch. This is because one wants, at first, to laugh; her evident seriousness feels a little comic, and then you realize that these angry gestures, her hands slicing at the air, her focused expression and frown, are in dead earnest. She isn't

just playing around up there, and the dollar bills waved at her or tucked into her bra or belt seem an inappropriate annoyance. Here is no complicity with the audience, no mutual acknowledgment of the illusion; she wants us to be convinced, and I am: one comes to believe that the rage of her performance, the sense of having been wounded by men, is absolutely real—even though the physical trappings are, literally, false.

What fascinates me about both these performers is that it's through illusion, through the act of performance, that we somehow have the feeling of experiencing the artist's "true self"—that is, we get to something genuine, emotionally charged, authoritative, convincing. What is being shown to us is not, in the usual sense, an underlying reality. Conventional wisdom would encourage us to think of the *real* Tish or Billie



MUSTY CHIFFON BY JASON GAVANN

Jean as the man without wig or glitter, deprived of the affectations of performance. But seeing these glamorous and powerful creatures on stage, we know we're encountering something *authentic*.

Does performance reveal a true self, then, or does it create one?

3. The Comedy of Gender

Drag queens have been appearing lately not just on backroom stages with tinsel curtains, but in the dense and abstract prose of academic discourse. Contemporary critical theory is enormously interested in questions of identity, and in the relationships between the sense of self and both gender and sexual orientation. Who are you? A man or a woman? Gay or straight? What do those terms mean to you? Where did you learn those meanings, and what sustains your belief in them? The more we try to examine what a self is, the more fluid identity seems. Is any self a kind of construct—a kind of *performance*—which shifts in context? "We're born naked," RuPaul says, "and after that it's all drag."

The term "performative speech" refers to words that in themselves make something happen, for instance, "I now pronounce you man and wife." But "man" and "woman," "gay" and "straight," are also performative terms, in their way; they suggest that we must act in certain ways, implying a range of behaviors. These performative terms take on such power that they seem natural to us—though of course there's nothing "natural" about, say, high heels or black leather motorcycle jackets. These are signifiers whose sexual meanings are determined by culture, uniforms of gender.

Sometimes the best way to know what something is to exaggerate it, and that's part of drag's function—to hold a big, parodying magnifying glass up to practices of gender and make their nature apparent. Drag is a kind of cultural guerrilla theater, working out on the forefront of gender; in drag performance, our questions about what gender is and how it determines behavior are writ large, made ironic, called into question. Drag makes performance out of the performative. Drag observes no rules, takes no prisoners. I can't think of a critic who has better articulated drag's position in relation to gender roles than Judith Butler, in her book *Gender Trouble*: "Heterosexuality offers normative sexual positions that are intrinsically impossible to embody, and the persistent failure to identify fully and without incoherence with these positions reveals heterosexuality itself not only as a compulsory law, but as an inevitable comedy." The "normative" behaviors of each gender, in other words, are impossible roles to maintain—they're too restrictive for the complicated, fluid personalities that human beings really are. But where the sexual liberation movements of the '70s would

regard such oppressive roles as tragic, Butler points out what the drag queens have been intuiting all along—how gender behavior involves, *by nature*, a gap between being and seeming. And how this gap makes us all into comic actors, performing our roles in the comic pageantry of gender. How, in other words, we are all drag queens, constantly trying to get our outfits right.

And that is why drag makes us anxious, since it tells us something about ourselves we aren't sure we want to know.

4. Pizza Bra

Drag, like any art, evolves, and in the last 10 or 15 years there's a new self-consciousness and spirit of innovation. With Barbra and Liza looking a little tired these days, a younger generation of drag queens has been pushing the rhinestone envelope. I've already suggested dividing drag queens into two categories, but these new luminaries parading in the footlights suggest a further refinement of my system of classification.

Sincerists believe that beauty is possible, that the illusion of beauty is worth the effort, even if the attempt is doomed. "Female impersonators" are *Sincerists*, as are all drag queens who strive for moments under the spotlight when square jaws and prominent Adams apples fade away in the fused glamour of spotlights and sequins and just the right gestures. *La Cage aux Folles*, Miss Gay Massachusetts, Jimmy James as Marilyn Monroe: *Sincerists*.

But what are we to make of the drag performer who, dressed like Carol Brady in the eponymous TV show, plays air guitar while lipsynching a heavy metal tune? *Ironists* aren't trying to fool anyone; they are quite happy with the gap between gesture and accomplishment, and don't necessarily even try to seem. Ryan Landry, for instance, is a marvelous example of the ironic drag; he's appeared for several seasons in his notorious "pizza bra," two slices of cheese pizza taped to his chest with silver duct tape. He nibbles at the tips of the slices during his performance. This is far, far from Barbra; does it deny beauty as an option or question just what beauty is? It represents drag pushing forward, evolving into unexplored territory.

Here on the edge one encounters Gloria Hole, a tough-talking archetypal high school bad girl who throws her audience the finger, and who seems to be perpetually smoking a Marlboro (whether she is or not) and popping her gum, ready to deck anyone who messes with her. And the charming DeMonica Harm, who has an ineffable combination of good-natured sociability combined with the sense that, at any moment, without provocation, she might do *anything*.

5. The Triumph of Musty Chiffon

Which brings us back, of course, to Musty, who dwells in a shadowy zone between the Extremely Ironic and the Weirdly Sincere. The comedy—and the edge—of her performance derives from this strange balancing act. Is she laughing at these songs of the '60s ("Goldfinger," for instance, and Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit") or admiring them, or both? When she does a torchy ballad, does she mean for us to laugh or to be moved, or to be suspended in some zone of uncertainty?

Certainly there's much of uncertainty here, as an inventory of Musty demonstrates. The first thing one notices are the breasts: huge, hard-looking and preternaturally round, these immense impedimenta aren't designed for naturalism. Emphasized further by Musty's trademark spandex in psychedelic patterns, the breasts dominate Musty's body, poking far out into space as if it is through them that she apprehends the world.

Next one sees the hair—a black pouf, further extending her into space, making Musty even taller and more formidable. Some of the wig flows downward to frame her face, complementing the darkness of the eye makeup, but the overall impression is of volume, of solid shiny dark shapes of hair.

Together, Musty's breasts and hair don't make her look "like a woman." Instead, the

emphasis on artifice points toward a different ambition: to look like a drag queen, a lounge act, a parody of a parody. What an ambition: not to pass, but to parade, not to succeed in impersonation but to construct a display of artifice so self-involved as to somehow itself become compelling.

This quality of "not passing" is further heightened by the fact that Musty sings in her own voice, which is probably the single element which most distinguishes her performance. When I heard her first, it was a winter night in Provincetown, at one of the Cafe Musicale evenings organized by the late Billy Forlenza. Musty, in characteristic black, stood up and sang Kurt Weill's "Lost in the Stars" with barely a trace of irony, and the results were stunning. After all, she *was* irony—why point to it? In a performance so shaded and strange, even the mere raising of an eyebrow sent signals to the rapt audience.

The voice is a little throaty, with a hint of Lucky Strikes in it. It is not a young voice, but conveys a certain world-weary charm, a ripening through the agencies of time and of loss. It is a voice very odd indeed when applied to the schlock repertoire of late '60s/early '70s radio fodder of Musty's recent show: Steppenwolf, Janis Ian's "Society's Child." I would, myself, vote for Kurt Weill, but Musty's ambition is to be a sort of cocktail lounge act, a delicious parody of a second-string performer, slightly over the hill but trying to keep up with what's new; she doesn't want to be Grace Slick singing "White

Rabbit," but the chanteuse at the Holiday Inn in Cedar Rapids doing a Grace Slick cover. It's a strange ambition, and it makes the performance shimmer with so many layers of irony that we don't always know where we are.

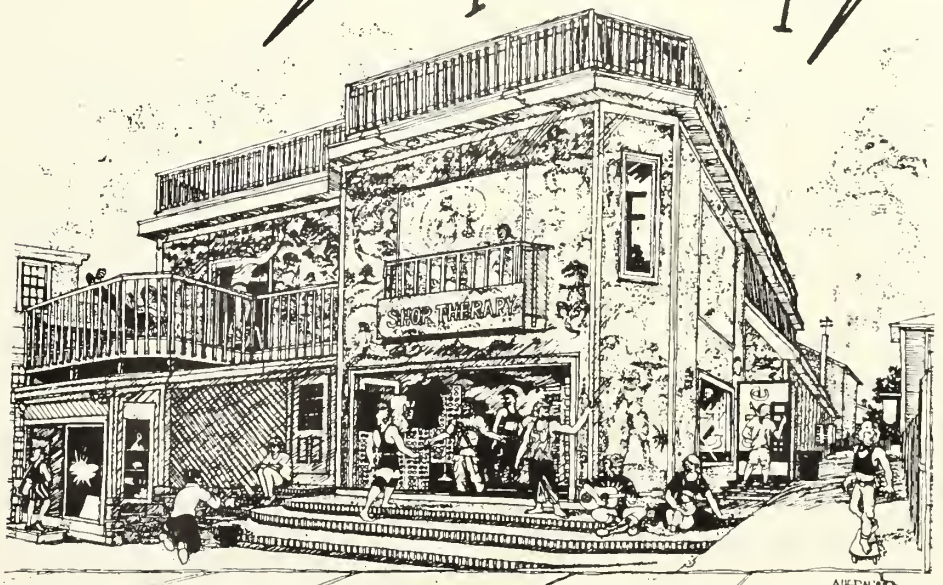
Where we are is inside a fantasy—Musty's—and surely that is part of what makes drag both so lovely and so disturbing, this sense of a fantasy exposed, made public, of being invited in. Drag may amuse and unnerve by reminding us that gender is a performance and a comedy, but it also charms and frightens us by revealing the secret life. In our moments of fantasy, we're all unstable selves, all multiple, but most of us don't dream of putting our interior cast of characters on stage. Drag queens like Musty Chiffon show us who we'd be if we're not careful—multiple, self-realizing. She invites us to imagine our private longings transformed into public tableaux. Musty's deepest dream is tacky—she wants, truly, to be this overly buxom lounge singer of questionable taste, in 1971, parading her voluptuously false body before the world, shaking her big breasts and ass on stage. And so she is a paradigm of fulfilled desire, a source of wonder and of terror. ■

Mark Doty, the cover feature of the 1994 issue of Provincetown Arts, is the author of four collections of poetry, including most recently Atlantis, reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

CAPE COD'S ORIGINAL ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE EMPORIUM

SMOKE SHOP • EROTIC ADULT BOUTIQUE • MARTIAL ARTS • UNIQUE T-SHIRTS
PEWTER COLLECTIBLES • NEW WAVE SUNGLASSES • TIE-DYE AND
GUATEMALAN CLOTHING • LEATHER GOODS • HARLEY DAVIDSON DIST.
We specialize in Sterling Silver, Marcasite, American Indian, Fantasy,
Occult, Bika, Ethnic and Crystal Jewelry

346 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
508 - 487-9387



Quintet

BY SUSAN MITCHELL

When I write essays, there is often a preliminary thinking stage that is largely dialogue: voices discussing, arguing among themselves. This can go on for days, maybe weeks. Is this thinking as performance? What I love about mind theater is the rapidity with which thought follows or cuts in on thought. Essays do not move this quickly: they try, they attempt, they tentatively this and that. Poems move this quickly, and as a poet I am attracted to speed—to whiz, to whip, to double time. What follows is not a draft on its way to becoming an essay, but an essay that has used mind theater as its model. The speakers are all parts of myself: S stands for Susan, and C for Carla, a middle name which for two days was my given name. Carla's is a life gone underground, which explains, perhaps, C's identification with the marginal, the disenfranchised, the abject.

S₁: But getting back to your question, my ideal workshop or classroom would be John Cage's Rolywholyover Circus.

S₁: You're talking about that hands-on exhibit that was at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles two or three years ago.

S₂: It was like one of those fairy tale castles where disembodied hands set out lavish dinners, pour the wine, and

S₁: What I liked best were the computers that picked out musical selections for you—

S₁: privately taped recordings Cage had made of contemporary music not yet available on cassette or CD. Within the impersonal museum setting, the listening was intimate, reverberating with Cage's listening. Selections randomly made by computer, yet chosen for you.

S₁: So this was not only avant-garde music, but avant-garde listening: you were hearing what was not yet available to a larger public.

S₂: And avant-garde listening—or looking—is always more personal and because more personal

S₁: Which is something you should have at a university, instructors introducing you to what has not yet become book or disc. But you rarely get this, you

S₂: And then those beautifully crafted chests of drawers that were part of the Circus. The kind I'd expect to hold butterfly collections.

S₁: Only what each drawer held was a book. Opening a drawer and finding a book—it was like coming on treasure. And since large tables with chairs conveniently arranged around them were also part of the Circus, you could sit and

read until the museum closed. And keep coming back until you had read every book.

S₁: When I was there, works were coming down and going up. And that was part of Cage's plan. When you wandered around it kept changing even as you looked at it. You couldn't come back to the same Circus

S₂: the way you come back to the same art history text or the same anthology of poems. Though really these should change every few weeks since the past keeps changing. Every day of my life the past is different.

S₁: And what artists and writers of the past

S₂: would show or publish of their work in the light of the present and in the light of a future dimly perceived though the present would

S₁: it have made a difference if Cage had been there? I don't mean as a ghost, I mean if you could have talked to him in person, as well as through the Circus. Or do you prefer absentee teachers?

S₂: Are you asking me whether I prefer hanging out with a poet or artist—

S₁: going on book-buying sprees or to the grocery to see whether your artist gets off on root vegetables or tropical fruits—

S₂: to subletting their apartment for a couple of months or at least until I've read all their books, listened to their CDs, tried out their

S₁: What I'm saying is that Robert Lowell face to face in conference

S₁ & S₂: When was this?

S₁: At a writers' conference at Wagner College where Lowell ran a two-week workshop back in the '60s. What left a lasting impression were the questions he asked me. Do you play a musical instrument? Yes? Well, then you can practice the piano when you can't write poems. Do you know a foreign language? Then you can translate when you can't write poems of your own. The questions were all directed at what I could do if I were blocked in my writing, which incidentally I wasn't, so this was something on Lowell's mind. What he conveyed to me, powerfully, was that poetry has to be the center of life for a poet. Everything else is set up to nurture and support and feed into that life. The life I was to live when I couldn't write had to be arranged in ways that deepen and

S₂: eventually lead back to writing. The piano playing would return you to the nonverbal, where the creative energy is strongest, and in peculiar ways, so would the translating since there is that split second for me when I read a poem in Italian or French where I understand—outside or apart from language.

S₁: And translating would allow you to inhabit another persona, another life, when your own psyche was abducted from you: allow you to draw creative energy from the other, tap into their excitement, their emotions

S₂: and so prime your own creative pump.

S₁: Which reminds me of something the actor Hume Cronyn said. Before he was known and had parts in plays and films

S₁: But getting back to Lowell, the seriousness

S₂: No one had ever taken me that seriously, and he was taking me seriously before I had anything but a handful of poems. Nothing published. The seriousness was a quality of his. It was a talent too. And it gave everything he looked at and talked about an aura—I glowed back. If a teacher doesn't make it possible for a student to glow back

S₁: The seriousness is like the artist's creative focus and concentration. And it's related to desire, an intensity of gaze, the aggression and appetite in the artist's and poet's attention.

S₂: As you say this, I'm getting a picture of Pygmalion rubbing and rubbing his ivory sculpture, the figure of a woman he has made, which his rubbing brings to life.

S₁: The gaze, the looking is in the artist's hands—they are staring as they work.

S₁: And you must have learned from Lowell's seriousness that you have to take yourself that seriously if you are going to be a poet—if you are going to heat up and glow.

S₂: The first time I saw the muse

S₁ & S₂: The muse? Really?

S₂: An ancient Greek sculpture of the muse. What struck me was how much she looked like a straight-A student. Not a particularly beautiful girl, but with tremendous intelligence and seriousness in her face. You knew she'd be a good listener. So it was her listening that would call forth from the poet. She inspired by listening, and she's the part of the poet that listens—that listens intently. Which means she is taking you seriously.

S₁: And the part of the artist that looks, that's all eyes open.

S₂: Which is what happens when a workshop is going well. There's a quality to the listening that always reminds me of something the German writer, Kleist, said in one of his essays—that a person in the act of speaking *finds a strange source of inspiration in the face of his or her listener: a look that signals the comprehension of a half-expressed thought*.

S₁: So the muse—and the good teacher—provide the look that signals comprehension, and the one speaking takes heart and goes on speaking.

S₂: The problem, though, with even the best workshop is that everyone is in critical mode. After all, you come to a workshop to receive and to give criticism. But you don't begin to write from your critical mode. So paradoxically, the better your critic becomes, the harder it may be to create. The critic is too awake, too vigilant, and the creative part of the brain goes to sleep.

S₁: But can creativity be taught?

S₂: Creativity is difficult to talk about, which is why it's so difficult to teach. Could you describe what the urge to write feels like? Could you ex-

plain exactly how you know, what it is that's propelling you to the typewriter? If only you could point to what's going on in your psyche. You and your workshop go out in a boat with a glass bottom, and you say, Do you see that current? Well, sway to its rhythm, get in synch with those fish. Because I think one learns to be creative through imitation. Imitation of the creative processes at work in the world.

S₁: When a student's blocked or overly critical, I recommend reading W.C. Williams's *Kora in Hell*—

S₂: *Bebe esa purga. It is the goats of Santo Domingo talking. Bebe esa purga! Bebeesapurga!*—

S₁: because it acts out what it's talking about, the imagination. Because it's improvisational, because it goes from one thing to another.

S₃: So something in the reader's brain begins to imitate its thought-rhythms?

S₁: And Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* is good to read because the boundaries of the self, the characters' selves, are so fluid in that novel that the reader comes close to his or her own molten place in the psyche. The place where the creative energy is, where everything is flowing and merging and interpenetrating.

S₃: Again, through imitation? Because to understand, the mind of the reader has to imitate the mind of the writer?

S₁: Woolf said that she liked to read Shakespeare right after she finished writing, when her mind was working at its fastest. According to Woolf, Shakespeare thought faster than any other writer, so to make her own thinking speed up, she read him when she was at her hottest, her most creative.

S₃: Workshops are primarily concerned with the verbal

S₂: and creativity primarily with nonverbal processes, since a lot has to be brought together outside language—oppositions or at least different categories—before it enters into language compounded and fused. T.S. Eliot said that it is not the intensity of the emotions, but the intensity of the artistic process, the creative process, that provides the pressure to fuse the different components.

S₁: So when language goes wild—*Shivelights and shadowtackle in long lashes lace, lance, and pair*—it's because the artistic process has heated up in Hopkins.

S₂: And when Browning writes, *That trick is, the artificer melts up wax/ with honey, so to speak; he mingles gold/ With gold's alloy, and, duly tempering both,/ Effects a manageable mass, then works*, I've always thought he was really talking about his own creative process.

S₁: Isn't that what Cage was up to in the Rolywholyover Circus? He wanted many different local museums to contribute works to the Circus and in that way collect a body of disparate objects: coins, paintings, minerals, utensils, all of it mixed together. Categories are exploded, the objects brought together to make something totally new.

S₂: What Crane was doing when he wrote, *The stars are caught and lived in the sun's ray and Oval encyclicals in canyons heaping*. There's a mixing of categories here that surprises and delights.

S₃: Which is why I like to invite musicians and actors into my poetry workshops. A different kind of thinking process evolves, a process that combines musical thinking with poetic thinking. When the Emerson Quartet visited my workshop—

S₁: and having all those musical instruments, especially the cello, in such a small room, it made me think of Herbert's *a box where sweets compacted lie*—

S₃: they performed Webern's *Six Bagatelles* which takes about three minutes to hear, the pieces are that compressed: yet enormous in their power to suggest and open up in the listener. If you look at the score, you notice that four of the six *Bagatelles* begin with a rest, a silence. The silence not separate from the music, but what starts it off.

S₁: Does this mean the silence is alive in some way, maybe not really silent?

S₃: For me it suggests—especially since the pieces are so brief, with that brevity one associates with fragments—that Webern broke his *Bagatelles* away from something he was listening to, broke it off just where hearing began. But to hear the place where hearing begins, he had to include some of the silence it starts up from. The silence was broken off with it, it stuck to it. It was impossible to make a clean break without losing something of the first sound. As if from the pressure of the artistic process, silence and sound had fused.

S₂: Or perhaps Webern thought the music was going on long before it became audible for him. So he included a silence that he suspected was not really silence. There was music going on in it which someone else might hear.

S₁: Which raises the question do you record only what begins to sound like a poem? Or do you record what you hear, all its incoherence preserved?

S₃: That touches on something the Emerson's first violinist, Eugene Drucker, said to me. I'd asked him how he remembers music that he's not able to sing. His answer was, *To us, everything is singable*. Which means that a poet's ability to read aloud, to perform, what s/he has written is going to influence what s/he perceives to be a poem. If you are gifted and innovative as a poet, but weak as a performer, you may actually limit yourself, rejecting your most experimental work. But if you can learn how to perform your new strange poem. Maybe performance is part of the poetic process.

S₂: That Shakespeare was actor and playwright.

S₃: When Hume Cronyn visited my workshop, I asked him if he ever changed what the playwright had written because he felt it would not perform well. And he immediately responded with an example. *Suppose*, he said, *the playwright has indicated that the character is supposed to cry,*

but I feel the scene would be more effective if the character were to laugh and fight back his tears. And then Cronyn began to transform himself into a man laughing as he fights back his tears. Without makeup, his face began to change, it seemed to ripple, and suddenly he was no longer Hume Cronyn. He was a man trying very hard not to cry, a man laughing to push down his tears. When he finished the performance, his face rippled back into his own, the face of Hume Cronyn.

S₁: If I try to explain to workshop students that when I write, my consciousness has to be altered—that I don't write from the social self, from everyday consciousness—

S₃: no one knows what you are talking about unless they have experienced it themselves. Because as a poet you cannot perform the transformation. You have never watched yourself from the outside as you felt the urge to write. But once you've seen someone go into persona, you know, you understand what altered consciousness is. And it's spooky.

S₁: What if an actor were able to watch you shift into the creative state, imitate it, and then play it back for you through performance?

S₂: Nietzsche believed you had to undergo metamorphosis in order to behold a vision outside yourself.

S₁: So you think that Hume Cronyn transformed into a man fighting back his tears is starting to have a vision of the world different from his own? Or is that what happens to the playwright, the poet?

S₃: When Cronyn transformed himself, it must have been by imitating what he'd seen of people fighting back their tears. But how deep into himself does that imitation take him? If I listen to Beethoven's early quartets, with their sudden mood shifts, those dramatic veerings between tenderness and rage, longing and loss—if I listen obsessively, day after day, will I begin to imitate that emotional structure in my writing?

S₁: You keep suggesting that you learn through imitation?

S₃: Through nonverbal imitation of deep structures. Which might be how we learn what becomes our own emotional dynamics—through imitation of family emotional dynamics.

S₁: You think you take in the whole *stück*?

S₂: Even the larger dynamics of neighborhood and city. Which is why I like Cage's *Circus* so much. It reproduces what I experienced as a child growing up in NYC. You have so much offering itself to you impersonally. You wander through museums, movie houses, theaters, concert halls. And all those performances are like magic rooms. You're in that castle Cocteau dreamed up for *Beauty and the Beast*. Eventually, the city becomes your psyche, its tempos, its rapid shifts, its many languages.

S₃: So why then do I want animals in the classroom?

S₁: You and W.H. Auden. In his daydream College for Bards the curriculum was to include looking after a domestic animal and cultivating a garden plot. Whether or not the student was to bring his or her domestic animal to workshop—

S₄: Putting my hands on an animal or bird, feeling its breath coming and going through fur, through feathers, puts me close to

S₃: whatever it is that precedes the poem, that precedes the verbal—a quickening.

S₄: And I'm all for paints, unguents, oils, pollens, muds in the classroom. Sands from different beaches.

S₃: And musical instruments?

S₄: Why not? How many poets have had the opportunity to try out sounds on different musical instruments? Just the percussion instruments alone would—and to run your fingers through pollens, seeds, burrs, yeasts, twigs. Why should artists have all the fun? At least women get to play with makeup, if they want to, all those creams, powders, oils, pitchy elixirs. The unctuous, the tallowy, the blubbery. If you want a language that's tactile, that's physical, then you need to get your hands on the world. What astounds me is how limited physical experience is for most people. All the experimentation goes on in the sexual area, but that's only a small part of physical experience. And while it's true that students seem to read less and less, there are more serious deprivations.

C: Because our educational system is set up to serve technocracy, not human beings. It's set up to anaesthetize our humanity, so we can be efficient. It's set up to hover over and observe the child, to evaluate and reward the child, to control and manage, to pressure and restrict. And surveillance, evaluation, rewards, competition, over-control, and pressure are all known killers of creativity.

S₁, S₂, S₃, & S₄: Who are you?

C: I am the erased, the obliterated, the unre-membered. I am what has slipped your mind, dropped from your thoughts, gone in one ear and out the other. I am the shoved under, the blank you draw, what you have on the tip of your tongue. I am the blocked out, the repressed, the dream you had, but don't remember. But if you must give me a name, call me rage and grief.

S₃: Rage and grief over what?

C: Our educational system trains us early to dispense with beauty, with sensuous experience. Look at the buildings we put up as schools and universities. What these buildings tell us, in their ugliness and sterility, their prison-like appearance, is exactly what Americans think of education. If you value something or someone, do you put them in a building made of cement and cinder blocks? Is this a building that a successful person would choose to live in?

S₁: Does the ugliness of the public school or public university building—because we are talking exclusively of public education, am I right?

C: Absolutely. The disparity

S₁: Does that ugliness reflect Americans' contempt for education? Or is it the embodiment of their own fear of schools and teachers? A sort of Huck Finn attitude—the teacher, man or woman, as the schoolmarm and the student, boy or girl, as the child who wants to escape the parlor and run toward free country?

C: Probably both. I think the United States has not outgrown its original pioneer mentality. A real man uses his body to survive, wimps use their brains. As long as survival is your number one priority, this attitude makes sense. But once you get beyond subsistence level, once the Wild West has been won, you want a different attitude.

S₄: What's happened though is that certain subjects receive the stamp of approval of the pioneer mentality—mathematics, engineering, computer science, for example. These are manly, practical, facing toward the future. While other subjects—poetry, music, and the visual arts, say—are viewed as fluff, superfluous. What's particularly disturbing is that what gets approved is controlled by the left side of the brain, what's dispensed with is controlled by the right side.

C: Yes, it's this wanting to use only a part of the brain that I find so alarming. When you study the evolution of the human brain, you observe that the brain evolved by increasing its size. To neglect right brain activities—comprehension of music and emotion, insight and intuitive reasoning, gestalt information, to mention just a few—to neglect these is to educate the brain to grow smaller.

S₁: Or the left side of the brain is being encouraged to grow at the expense of the right, and what you really have is the cultural or social equivalent to genetic engineering.

C: But who exactly is doing the engineering? Who is making the decisions? And why? Because if, as I suspect, the decisions are being made by people with poorly developed right brain activities, then

S₂: Your question about who is making the decisions, it reminds me of a show that was put on a couple of years ago in California, at the Oakland Museum. It was called *de-Persona*, did you happen to see it?

C: What I remember vividly was a work by Lorna Simpson called "Easy for Who to Say" which consisted of five color Polaroid prints of the same woman. In each photo the face was replaced by a white oval with a vowel written on it. A stood for amnesia, E for error, I for indifference, O for omission, and U for uncivil. The repetition of the faceless figures, the way they seem like closed systems refusing

S₂: And the way, in many of the works, dolls, cartoons, plastic toy figures were substituted for the human, there was something slyly chilling—and David Finn's figures made out of discarded materials and garbage

C: The marginal, the repudiated, the abject come back to haunt with terrifying masks, instead of faces. Menacing masks for faces.

S₁: Do you think the right side of the brain will come back to haunt the left?

C: I think it already has in the form of increased violence in our society. But what really

S₃: Coming back to facelessness for a moment

S₁: Kafka predicted it long before

S₂: And isn't Gregor Samsa really a work of abject art? The apple his father throws at him, that sticks to his body, browning, rotting. The dust curls on the floor stick to him. And he's kept in a room with all the family's discarded furniture

S₃: The increasing substitution of public self for private self is another form of facelessness.

S₁: You mean the filler music I'm forced to hear whenever I'm put on hold, the way I can't use the waiting time as I would like to. I can't read a book, I can't think my thoughts.

C: Or the way it's assumed on planes now that everyone is going to watch the film. The stewardess dims the lights, pulls down the shade in front of your window. What if I want to read a book? What if I want to write? The peculiar way in which a public self is substituted for my private self. Instead of my own thoughts, I'm fed spiritual and intellectual junk food.

S₂: The poets who seem most concerned with the relationship between public and private selves are Susan Howe and Leslie Scalapino. Howe is obsessed with the outsider, the misfit, the non-conformist—her most recent book is called *The Nonconformist's Memorial*. And yet at the same time, the self is so elusive in her works, so difficult to discover or pinpoint as it escapes from text to text. And Scalapino is the dramatist of the self in public places, the self experiencing its interiority in malls, in coffee shops, on the street. In *The Front Matter, Dead Souls* the public realm has become the interior self, there is no distinction between public and private, outside and inside. The book is brilliant and terrifying.

S₄: Are you saying there's a relationship between left-brain take-over and the take-over of the public self?

C: What I notice is that the neglect of right-brain activities and the neglect of the humanities and the arts occurs in public schools, not in private schools, and in public universities, not in private. It's as if those coming from higher income brackets are encouraged to have and develop private selves while those in lower-income brackets are encouraged to have public selves. There are two very different educational systems, but the students I teach now at a public university are just as intelligent and gifted as students I taught at a private college. So why shouldn't they be getting an equal education?

S₁: If what you are saying is true

C: then we no longer have a democratic society. To be sure there are exceptions to what I am saying. Public education varies from state to state and even within the state. But even that variation supports my point. If the quality of education I am to receive depends on chance factors—whether I'm born in Florida as opposed

to Massachusetts, Mississippi as opposed to California; whether my parents are wealthy or poor, it's more than likely that a large proportion of the intellectually gifted and artistically talented will never get to create a smidgeon of what they are capable of

S₁: and energy that should pour into the society
C: drains out instead. And even where you do find a democratic spirit at work, it's misguided at best. I'm referring to well-meaning people who try to limit poetry to what can be understood by large masses of people. That's the wrong democratic impulse. The right democratic impulse is to educate large masses of people so that they can understand even the most difficult, the most inaccessible, the most elusive poems. Poems are difficult because they come from the private self which has its own idiosyncratic language. If we could speak our private languages to one another and be understood, that would probably be the end of loneliness—loneliness is proof that the language we speak every day is not our native tongue. Poetry, like the other arts, attempts to use one's real language, the language that one particular brain in one particular body can make. So when you teach poetry as literature, you are teaching many different languages—as many languages as there are poets. And the language of a great poet draws on the whole brain, the left brain which controls language and perception of details and the right brain which controls comprehension of music and emotion, melodic speech, insight and intuition, the visual-spatial intelligence, and social-emotional nuances.

S₄: But people are so uncomfortable with, so ashamed of the private self. One day when I was walking through my neighborhood, I saw a boy of about 10 who was talking to a bird in a tree. He was speaking something between English and bird language. Very tenderly. Then he saw me, and in a flash he was on his bike and speeding away. A couple of days later I saw the same boy roller-blading with six other boys. The leader was shouting, "You shut the fuck up," a refrain which was picked up by each boy in turn. It was repeated over and over, each voice shouting it out.
S₁: It was like a lesson. Or it was the lesson of the day.

C: And when that boy is in school, he will shut the fuck up. His face will shut up, it will be as blank, as empty of the private as any of the works in the *de-Persona* show.

S₄: Are you saying our society wants him that way?

C: I'm saying our society has not yet realized what his silence is going to cost it. ■

Susan Mitchell's most recent book of poems, Rapture, won the first Kingsley Tufts Award and was a National Book Award finalist. She has received grants from the Guggenheim and Lanman Foundations, and also from the NEA. A professor at Florida Atlantic University, she will be teaching a poetry workshop in the Fine Arts Work Center's summer program.

SUPPORTING THE ARTS COMMUNITY

PEABODY & ARNOLD

Counsellors at Law

PEABODY & ARNOLD IS A FULL SERVICE LAW FIRM
SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE BUSINESS, REAL ESTATE
AND FINANCIAL COMMUNITIES

OFFERING SERVICES IN THE AREA OF INTELLECTUAL
PROPERTY, INCLUDING ART LAW
AND PUBLISHING

MOLLY H. SHERDEN ♦ DONALD S. BURNHAM ♦ MARK E. YOUNG

50 ROWES WHARF
BOSTON, MA 02110
TELEPHONE: (617) 951-2100
FAX: (617) 951-2125

ONE CITIZENS PLAZA
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903
TELEPHONE: (401) 831-8330
FAX: (401) 831-8359

Subscribe to

PROVINCETOWN

A R T S

- One Year (single issue) \$100.00
- Two Years (two single issues) \$200.00
- Lifetime Subscription \$100.00
- Gift Subscription \$10.00
- we will include a card announcing the gift in your name:

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE:

- ☐ 1987 (Norman Mailer) \$25.00
- ☐ 1988 (Robert Motherwell) \$10.00
- ☐ 1989 (Annie Dillard) \$15.00
- ☐ 1990 (Joel Meyerowitz) \$15.00
- ☐ 1991 (Long Point Gallery) \$10.00
- ☐ 1992 (Stanley Kunitz) \$10.00
- ☐ 1993 (Fine Arts Work Center) \$10.00
- ☐ 1994 (Mark Doty) \$10.00
- ☐ 1995 (Mary Oliver) \$10.00
- ☐ 1996 (Karen Finley) \$10.00
- All rates include first class postage

PROVINCETOWN ARTS T-SHIRTS

designed by John Grillo
\$15.00 plus \$3.00 shipping • large and x-large only

PROVINCETOWN ARTS PAINTER'S CAPS

\$10.00

Send order and payment to:

PROVINCETOWN ARTS INC. • P.O. Box #35, Provincetown, MA 02657 • (508) 487-3167



OPEN HOUSE, 1980s

Only Connect: *The Art of Castle Hill*

BY HAMILTON KAHN

IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE TOWER—the three-story structure that houses its main office—it would be easy to overlook Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill, located in an old barn in a hollow beneath a hill, tucked behind a private home near the corner of Castle and Meetinghouse Roads. There's a carved wooden sign above the sliding door, and another small sign on the tower—a former windmill—but none on the road, or anywhere leading up to the place.

Castle Hill doesn't do a lot to draw attention to itself. If you're not looking for it, you might not even notice it.

Living in the shadow of the Provincetown art colony has made it hard for Castle Hill to get noticed, considered, or recognized as the first-rate and somewhat unique cultural resource that it is, even though many of the artists who have taught at Castle Hill over the years have had close ties to Provincetown. Provincetown is where the galleries are, where the museums are, where the openings are, where the action is. Meanwhile, Castle Hill has quietly gone about its business, producing classes across a wide spectrum of interests, evening programs, exhibits, and special events both on- and off-site.

Not that getting noticed is always a good thing. Town regulations? Parking? Neighbors? Behind-the-scenes politics? It's all happened over the years, and Castle Hill has learned some important lessons in order to survive. It was seen as an elitist organization, so it learned how to serve the year-round community, not just the summer set. It was perceived as an organization

whose growth could affect the quality of life for neighbors, so it learned the difference between innovation and expansion. It was limited to relying entirely on talent at hand, so it learned to look beyond the horizon for inspiration.

Now pushing 25, Castle Hill has matured from youthful spontaneity to deliberate connectedness. It's a cultural resource that touches and feeds the Lower Cape aesthetic, if there is such a thing, perhaps even embodies it. Casual yet serious, small-town yet world-class, Castle Hill provides the common ground for exchanging high ideas at sea level, and serves as a launching pad for flights of fancy to many destinations.

The basic concept is simple enough, and still primarily in place. Each year, the call goes out: "Are there any craftspeople, artists, and writers around here who want to teach a class?" In some towns, that might not amount to much, but in Truro it has meant a remarkable level of both talent and continuity—the likes of sculptor



EDWIN DICKINSON AND CATHERINE DAY, 1973

Sidney Simon, poet Alan Dugan, photographer Joel Meyerowitz, writer Anne Bernays, artists Xavier Gonzales and Ethel Edwards, all of them longtime residents, all of them Castle Hill faculty members. That concept has been expanded to include some of the best younger Outer Cape artists, such as Donald Beal and Paul Bowen, visiting artists like rustic furniture-maker Daniel Mack, ceramic artist Bennett Bean and, this summer, multicultural installation artist Maria Magdalena Compos-Pons. And through its Teichman Chair (named for the late Sabina Teichman, an artist and teacher involved in the local art community for many years), Castle Hill has presented lectures and workshops by a stellar galaxy of contemporary American artists, including Helen Frankenthaler, Mary Frank, Grace Hartigan, Will Barnet, George Segal, Faith Ringgold, and Robert Blackburn.

Castle Hill has been propped up, shut down, upgraded, trimmed back, retrenched, revived, and watched over by arts councils and guardian angels through the years, almost always living on a shoestring, almost always accomplishing and expanding its mission. It has endured, more than anything, through a connectedness to the people, towns, environment, and culture of the Outer Cape.



AMY BURRILL, BASKETWEAVING



ROBERT VICKREY TEACHING EGG TEMPERA

Charting the Path

In the beginning, Peter Brown, a local builder, suggested that a group of artists led by painter Harry Hollander use Pop Snow's old barn as artists' studios. That germinated into the idea of a school, and by the summer of 1972, the *Boston Globe* was touting Castle Hill as the "Cape's first art center" in a page-one story that emphasized founding director Joyce Johnson's early-1970s wilderness spirit. "I've learned to live on practically nothing," Johnson told *Globe* writer Gloria Negri. "Money isn't important to me except to live by and I've reduced my overhead to my gas bill."

Castle Hill was certainly *not* the first art school on Cape Cod—roll over, Charles Hawthorne—but it was one of only a handful anywhere offering courses across such a wide range of disciplines. The 1972 program had a 15-member faculty teaching 17 classes in printmaking, drawing, painting, sculpture, wood technology (described as the "study of the fundamental nature of wood's cellular structure"), plastics, weaving, etching, writing, fencing (!), jewelry and ceramics. The faculty included some distinguished artists and craftsmen who lived on the Cape, including egg tempera expert Robert Vickrey of Orleans and Dennis potter Harry Holl. The following year, the program ballooned to 37 teachers teaching 37 classes, including four for children and teenagers. Joining the faculty, among others, were ceramic artist Mikhail Zakin, who still teaches, abstract painter (and future UFO abduction expert) Budd Hopkins, painter Ella Jackson, children's teacher Nene Schardt, and watercolorist George Yater. By 1973, enrollment had more than doubled, from 184 the first year to 275 the second, and 389 the third.

Nature and ecology classes were introduced in 1974, as Johnson accented Castle Hill's connection with its surroundings. "Castle Hill is fortunate to exist in the midst of one of nature's most beautiful and unusual environments," the 1976 brochure declares. "Glacial hillocks and valleys protect the solitude of the Truro resident.



[LEFT TO RIGHT] MARY STACKHOUSE, CURRENT DIRECTOR; BARBARA WISE, PRESIDENT EMERITUS; CAROL GREEN, CURRENT PRESIDENT

Castle Hill exists as a meeting place to learn and share. It is felt that neither age nor experience limits the creative process; creativity is an innate human function. Our goal is to provide the environment in which to make this possible." Castle Hill was always spilling out of its barn doors, with an outdoor kiln firing in the back, a writing group on the deck, or a sketching class out on a Pamet Valley hillside. Castle Hill also began a relationship with the Cape Cod National Seashore in 1978 by co-sponsoring an environmental poster contest for schoolchildren—a precursor for a deeper involvement with local schools that began in the mid-1980s. The intriguing 1994 Castle Hill-Seashore collaboration, "Artists Map of the Cape Cod National Seashore," a travelling installation that charted the conceptual bond between the landscape and those who interpret it is another example.

Purchasing the barn and the tower in 1976, Castle Hill began tapping into state arts funding and continued to grow. The program's emphasis then was on crafts: in 1978, eight courses in weaving were offered, (none have been taught since 1994), along with four classes in jewelry-making (one in '96), in addition to classes in drawing, painting, ceramics, and sculpture.

At the turn of the decade, Johnson decided Castle Hill was strong enough to pass on to other, capable hands. Soon after, she began working as a news reporter, first for the *Advocate*, and then, for the past 10 years, for the *Cape Codder*, while continuing to teach at Castle Hill each summer. Dan Ranalli, a photographer, took over as director in 1980, and, not surprisingly, more



FIRST AUCTION, 1973



CARMEN CICERO PAINTING CLASS

photography courses were added to the schedule. Barbara Baker, who took the reins in '83, introduced art history seminars with Tony Vevers and Eleanor Munro, Saturday classes, and a course entitled "Sculptor/Scavenger," taught by a young Welsh sculptor and former Fine Arts Work Center fellow, Paul Bowen. Baker's four-year tenure as director continued to be marked by innovation and ambition—leading, in 1986, to an announcement of plans to enlarge the building to accommodate growing enrollment. But those plans were rejected by the Truro Zoning Board of Appeals and, in 1987, Castle Hill found itself shut down for violating building codes. The center relocated to the Schoolhouse Gallery in North Truro for the summer of '87 during a major renovation of the barn, and by the time it reopened in 1988, Castle Hill was already looking for other ways to grow.

Community Connections

Struggle with the town and neighbors over expansion and parking plans had opened some wounds between Castle Hill and the year-round population, and the best method of healing proved to be the Artists in the Schools program started by Baker in 1985. With funding from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and the Humanities, Castle Hill had been sending local artists, writers, and craftspeople into local schools during the off-season, with exciting results. At a time when schools were increasingly cutting art programs to reduce budgets, Castle Hill artists were bringing in fresh ideas, techniques, and projects that could be finished in a week or two or three, and the program was rewarding for everyone—students, artists, teachers, and administrators. Under Baker's successor Christina Fenton—a former arts administrator in Pittsburgh and assistant director at the Fine Arts Work Center, who was hired in 1987—the program expanded, receiving an impressive \$18,000 grant from the Council in 1989. When that funding dried up, it was replaced with gifts and then a bequest from the late Ruth Yochelson, a long-time Castle Hill board member and Truro summer resident.

Fenton also relocated the summer lecture series to Wellfleet and hired more Provincetown artists, including Sal Del Deo and Jim Peters, raising the Center's profile and prestige as much as possible, without increasing its size. Under Mary



PETER FRANK MAKING POTTERY

Stackhouse, a ceramic artist hired as "interim co-director" with Kathryn Manson in 1990 and named director the following year, Castle Hill has found ways to expand the boundaries of what it can be while remaining true to its history. Legendary ceramic artist Toshiko Takaezu came as the Teichman Chair in 1991, and the lines dividing crafts and fine art began to blur. Artists such as Bowen, Anna Poor, Sally Fine, and Harvey Sadow defied categorization and countered lowest-common-denominator momentum. Castle Hill was a place of excitement, where at any given time, wood pulp could be churning in a papermaking workshop while, in the next rooms, a drawing class concentrated on the figure of a live model, a ceramics class threw pots, and a writing class met out on the deck. Free fall classes for seniors were introduced, and the newly inaugurated Ella Jackson Artists and Scholars Fund, named for the former faculty member, brought workshops with printmaker Michael Mazur in 1992, collagist Varujan Boghosian in '93, multi-faceted feminist artist Miriam Schapiro in '94, and sculptor Judy Pfaff in '95.

By all rights, this 25th year should be a time for Castle Hill to stand up and take its bows, but it is probably going to be up to others to blow its horn. While the rest of the local art scene will be clamoring to get attention for this event or that, Castle Hill will quietly offer one class after another, along with abundant special work-



FAITH RINGGOLD

shops, events, performances—boom, boom, boom, something different almost every day, an inseparable component of the summer experience for hundreds, no, thousands of people every year.

That connectedness is not unlike the Roy Staab reed sculpture installed last summer on a steep slope behind the Castle Hill barn, which graces the cover of this year's catalog in a pin-hole photograph by Marian Roth and now lies, collapsed, on the same hillside. More than happenstance, it is the creative assembly of ideas, materials, and energy in harmony with, and interpretive of, the natural environment. You wouldn't want to overlook it and, to see the true beauty of the Outer Cape, you can't overlook Castle Hill. ■

Hamilton Kahn is editor of the Provincetown Banner.



SIDNEY SIMON TEACHING

Castle Hill Directors

1971-1979	Joyce Johnson
1980-1982	Daniel Ranalli
1982-1983	Joyce Johnson (acting)
1983-1986	Barbara Baker
1987-1989	Christine Fenton
1990	Kathryn Manson and Mary Stackhouse
1991- present	Mary Stackhouse



RUTH NEWMAN, WORKSHOP ON ART THERAPY



BUDD HOPKINS PAINTING CLASS



SNOW'S STABLES, 1882



FAUSTA WEINGEIST WEAVING STUDIO

The Early Days of Castle Hill

BY JOYCE JOHNSON

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill was taking its first tentative steps toward becoming a successful art center. And tentative was the word. There was no money, just a wonderful old New England barn that had cried out for years to be converted to an art center. Eventually the cry was heard by a group of people who wanted just that. The alternative would have been fateful for the Snow's Stables, over a century old and once the hub of community activity. Built around 1882, it was used by Charles W. Snow for multiple purposes, including keeping a team of horses, storing equipment for his building trade, and serving as a retail paint store. He also rented sections to ever-changing tenants.

Contractor Peter Brown, who bought the property in the 1960s, told a group of people who first assembled to discuss the barn's future that if artists were not interested in using the space as studios or for a school, he would demolish the building and use the lot for another purpose. I attended that meeting of a handful of artists and craftsmen in August 1971. It was organized by the late Harry Hollander, who wanted a place to teach his specialty, working in plastics. Those who met at the home of craftsman Albert Kaufman were indeed very interested in the availability of studio space, even creating an art center. But without funds, and no one offering to produce them, the meeting ended without resolve, except that Brown was



FOUNDER JOYCE JOHNSON BEFORE THE CASTLE HILL TOWER, 1972

encouraged enough by the group's interest to move forward with renovations to stabilize the building, with the hope of renting sections as artists' studios.

For five years I had been running the Nauset School of Sculpture at my studio in North Eastham. Several weeks after the meeting, Hollander found me at my Truro home. Someone had pointed the general direction of my isolated homestead in a kettle pot and he arrived, tramping through a swamp and brambles, having missed the dirt road leading in. He suggested that I move my school to the barn and add a few diverse workshops to the program, including his particular workshop on plastic techniques. He urged me to take a look at what Brown was doing to renovate and repair the barn—adding windows for north light and reconstructing floors and walls to convert the barn into seven individual studios.

I followed the suggestion the next day and when I saw the new space, any questions and concerns faded away. If nothing else, I decided to rent the spacious main studio for my sculpture school, convinced my luck for running the school in Eastham during rainless summers in a

grove of pine trees without shelter would soon run out. Doris Harris, a ceramics teacher from Binghamton, New York, with a summer home in Wellfleet, had been a student in my school for several years and became very interested in the idea of a summer school in Truro also. She agreed to set up a ceramic department, a major start for a summer craft program. We told Brown we wanted to rent another room. Then we asked for two more as other artists and craftspeople expressed interest in teaching.

The first official meeting of a steering committee occurred in my Eastham home. It included Rigmor Holbrook Plezner and George Zilliac, both of Orleans, and myself. Eleanor Meldahl of Truro was invited but unable to attend. We decided to move forward. My sculpture school mailing list of about 200 people and a barrage of news releases began to inform people that an art center would be opening in late June close to the picturesque Pamet River in Truro. The news was well-received.

Funding was still an issue. I said I would work on the project without recompense until we saw what might happen. Brown said he would postpone the date to receive rent until June, a significant reprieve. And I borrowed \$250 on my newly acquired Master Charge card—all that was needed to get out the first one-page brochure describing 15 workshops.

Teachers agreed that the Center would not be obligated to run a workshop if the number of students needed to break even was not reached. The list of instructors was small but, in retrospect, formidable. Among them were Robert

Castle Hill Presidents

1971-76	Joyce Johnson
1977-78	Judge Daniel Klubock
1979	Mary Lou Friedman
1979-82	Lee Falk
1983-86	William Brill
1987	Charles LeClair
1988-89	Eleanor Munro
1990-94	Barbara Wise
1995-	Carol Green



PRIMITIVE CLAY FIRING



BRUCE HOADLEY, WORKSHOP ON WOOD TECHNOLOGY



ALAN DUGAN POETRY WORKSHOP



MIKHAIL ZAKIN DIGGING CLAY IN WELLFLEET

Vickrey, an internationally known egg tempera specialist who lives in Orleans, and New York sculptor Sidney Simon who has a summer home in Truro. Printmaker Jan Gelb of Provincetown agreed to teach, along with New Hampshire weaver Mary Bishop and Orleans poet Thomas Whitbread. Orleans printmaker Marcia Howe would teach experimental printmaking and Hollander, who lived year-round in Truro, would teach jewelry-making with plastics. His wife, Ruth, and Harris would comprise the ceramics department.

The Center had approached Dan Klubock, a Boston lawyer, to begin applying for non-profit status, which was finally certified a year or so later. He also counseled me, in the initial stages during the fall of 1971, to squelch a move by several residents of Castle Road to stop the Center. Since schools are allowed in residential areas, the attempt was groundless and thankfully faded away. We, of course, had no idea whether the Center would succeed. I was prepared to lose no more than \$2000 that first summer. As it worked out, we made a "profit" of about that much, some of which was paid me as salary. We need not have feared. The response to Castle Hill was steady and enthusiastic. Volunteers began to surface. Many, such as Mary Lou Friedman and Meldahl, are still working to keep the center afloat with fundraising and promotional efforts and of course there were Doris and Chet Harris, without whom there would never have

been a ceramic department. The economic reality was that even with so many volunteers, tuition still covered only about half of the operating costs. A board of trustees to help with fundraising was critical and soon came together.

Truro proved to be the ideal location. The town had no center for artists and writers. All ages were soon attracted to Castle Hill as though there were a magnet hidden among the barn's weathered beams. Some came to learn, others to teach or to fold flyers and stick labels on them. Others came to meet others—to feel a part of a worthwhile project.

Josiah Child, a retired Boston architect, had recently bought a home in Truro just up the hill from the Center. As a board member, he saw its potential and invited Louise Tate, the director of the newly-formed Massachusetts Council for the Arts, to see Castle Hill in the early fall, after the first summer. She liked what she saw and gave the Center its first grant, \$5000 for administrative salaries, which was repeated a second year. By the end of the first trial summer we were renting five of the seven studios. A year later we took over the entire barn and tower, which had become the Center's administrative offices.

The next eight years were thrilling and exhausting. Each summer the enrollment increased at least 10 percent. The evenings as well as the days were filled with classes and events. A lecture and concert series drew crowds of over 100 people. In a few years the number of classes rose

to over 40 offerings, among them a series of writing courses. Courses on nature were added, such as experimenting with natural dyes with Cape Cod National Seashore naturalist Hal Hinds. Dr. Graham Giese and Barbara and Charles "Stormy" Mayo taught coastal ecology and sea life and were excited enough by the response to start their own school the next year—the Center for Coastal Studies, which is now nationally acclaimed for its whale research.

Some of the most exciting workshops in those early days centered on the ceramic department, with ceramicist Mikhail Zakin acting as the Pied Piper of clay. She led students to discover over 12 natural clays at local beaches, most low-fire, but a few high-fire. They experimented with the clays and one summer built a wood-fired kiln in the back area, staying up for 24 hours to feed the straw and clay hulk filled with hand-crafted pots. Primitive pit firing was another course that attracted large classes.

The success of the Center was not without its down moments. Harris, on Memorial Weekend just before our anticipated opening in late June 1972, complained of a backache and went home to Binghamton to see her doctor. Within a short time she was diagnosed with cancer. She taught only one day at the Center and passed away the next spring, leaving a gaping hole in our program and dreams. She and her husband had completely outfitted the ceramic department with its sturdy tables, secondhand metal stools, deck, and kick wheels lovingly designed and constructed for the program.

In 1975, with only three years under our belt, Brown said he intended to sell the property and offered it to the fledgling board at a generously low price. A yearlong fundraising effort produced the down payment and we became landowners, filled with both excitement and anxiety.

The need for a strong board became clear if the Center was to honor its new obligations in maintaining the two buildings and the grounds. Friedman, a summer resident, agreed to become president of the board for a year and was succeeded by comic strip creator Lee Falk, who also had a summer home in Truro. He instituted a financial plan that has kept the Center in the black for almost two decades, giving subsequent presidents freedom to address the many other challenges that have arisen since Castle Hill's infancy.

Joyce Johnson, a writer and sculptor, was the founder of Castle Hill, president for six years, and director for eight years.



ELLA JACKSON'S CLASS FOR TEENAGERS

Surviving a Crunch

BY ELEANOR MUNRO

BY THE MID 1980s, CASTLE HILL had matured and needed upgraded facilities. Indeed, pressure to expand became so heated that a Building Fund was set in motion even before plans had been developed and presented to the various Truro Commissioners. Jack Kahn and Kirk Wilkinson chaired a campaign in 1985-86 that brought in some \$50,000 in additional pledges. This money would provide a cushion when, in time, we would be able to move ahead.

In midsummer of 1986, however, troubles between Castle Hill and several neighbors came to a head. The school's longtime street-parking right was summarily cancelled, and in September, the Zoning Board of Appeals upheld the Building Commissioner's refusal to grant a permit for an ambitious expansion plan which included an open parking lot with an attendant to move cars. In a frightening next step, town inspectors declared the old barn, home to summer classes, structurally unsafe. When that news circulated, some parents with children taking part in programs on campus began to worry. The school program was moved off-campus into the public schools themselves, where it continues. By October we received notice of the Appeals Board's denial of our petition to build, and the Center was shut down for safety reasons. The following summer classes operated out of the local Schoolhouse Gallery. At this point, the Board instructed our lawyer Lawrence Spaulding to initiate a lawsuit to force the Building Commissioner to agree to the presented expansion plan.

In fact, Castle Hill's Board was deeply divided over this initiative. Even at the time, the objec-



SCULPTURE CLASS

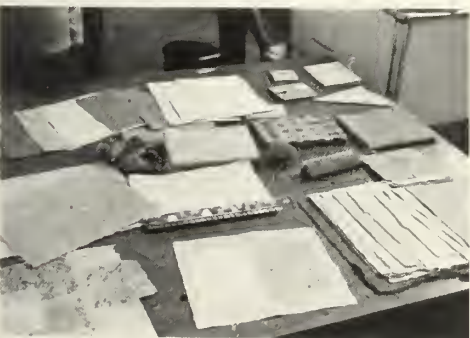
tions of the town to plans then on the table seemed justified in view of their complex nature, the limited size of the property, and the proximity of neighbors. The once-joyous cooperative spirit in and around the school seemed gone. There was even some feeling in Truro that the school had run its course and should close.

At that difficult time, I was asked to take on the Presidency of the Board. I agreed to do so providing there was a unanimous vote of support. Bill Brill kindly made that motion at the annual meeting. None of what followed could have been achieved if the Board hadn't been empowered to act on decisions ratified by the vote of all the Directors.

After a brief search for alternate sites, the sensible good will of the Board came into play and our course was unanimously agreed on. We withdrew the overly ambitious architectural plan and put our lawsuit on hold (where it remained until our legal position was verified). We voted to invest the remaining Building Fund reserves to bring the existing facility up to State safety code, following the directions of Building Commissioner Steven Williams and Town Counsel Edward Veara. Still ahead lay an argumentative evening before the full Truro Board of Appeals, where we defended our intent to remain in operation on Castle Road in Truro. In the end, we convinced our fellow citizens of our wish to contribute productive energies to the good of our shared community. All the same, one final appeal was made against us, this time to the State

Building Code Appeals Board in Boston. Thus a small Castle Hill contingent including director Christine Fenton, Spaulding, architect Paul Krueger, builder John Hopkins, and I traveled to Boston and made our case. In time that Board's decision was also favorable to us. The last chapter in the ultimately reunifying drama took place on an August afternoon in 1989, when Hopkins hoisted the historic iron rooster weather vane to the top of the renovated windmill by John Hopkins.

Today, as for 25 years, there exists an enormous reservoir of interest in the Truro Center for the Arts, which flowered in the heart of a small New England town and drew its first life blood from it. It began, as Joyce Johnson recalls, in Charles Snow's barn. His grandson, Raymond White and his wife, Priscilla, are still the school's good neighbors. Other Truro year-rounders



PAPERMAKING



DONALD STALTENBERG GRAPHICS WORKSHOP



JOEL MEYEROWITZ, 1986. PHOTO DEE FORST

helped realize Joyce's dream. Al Kaufman, who lives across the street, was one of the original planners. Tom Kane, once Truro's master electrician, re-wired the barn. Peter Hooen hand-cut 600 shingles for the windmill. Tom Kane the elder wrote one of his famous newspaper columns, offering "a sprig of mayflower" to Joyce for preserving the character of the place. When the school reopened in 1989, we polished the brass nameplates on the nearby mini-tower, and familiar names came shining out of the tarnish: Mary Lou Friedman, Fausta Weingeist, Lee Falk, Woody English, Lloyd Rose, and others.

The school's administrator during the years of legal turmoil was Ruth Jacobs. Through her, we gained bonds with other Truro institutions like the Historical Society and the library. And Castle Hill keeps the past alive through memorial lectureships in the names of artist Ella Jackson, and Sabrina Teichman, directed by their children Robert and Leslie Jackson, and Wendy

Levine respectively. Indeed, the threads of Truro's population summer and winter wind through the Center's history: Barbara Wise, Bill Brill, Charles LeClair, Charles Davidson, Carmi Bee, Walter Bingham—they and their families are the school's family, as are Ethel Edwards, Eleanor Meldhal, Joan Cohen, Joan Fox, Anna Poor, Joan McD Miller. During Barbara Wise's presidency, she and director Mary Stackhouse consolidated the school on its now sound base and encouraged its growth. President of the Board today is Carol Green-Nash, who is also on the Truro Conservation Trust.

Conservation is the word, as we learned through experience: to keep what is good and build slow and strong. ■

Eleanor Munro's profile of Penelope Jencks appears elsewhere in this issue.



GRAPHICS WORKSHOP WITH MICHAEL MAZUR

Good in All Seasons

BY BARBARA WISE

WITH GREAT PLEASURE AND PRIDE

I became president of Castle Hill's Board of Directors. Pleasure in the place, located so snugly in the heart of the Cape Cod community, one of the most beautiful locations in the world, and pride in the spirit of all the wonderful people who enter into the activities there.

My time there, 1990-94, was an exciting one for growth, expanding our boundaries, and facing challenges. The loss of gifts from the Massachusetts Council for the Arts, for instance, forced us to seek new support for the "Artists in the Schools" winter program.

One of my happiest memories was sitting on my deck with Ruth Yochelson and watching the twinkle in her eye as she asked Mary Stackhouse, "But won't you need more?" Her love for children and deep commitment to the Truro community provoked Ruth to fund this wonderful program.

Others came forward and we received a generous grant from the Plumsack Fund to offer free classes to seniors of the community in the fall. The Ella Jackson Fund began to sponsor workshops and brought in such prestigious artists as Michael Mazur, Varujan Boghosian, Miriam Schapiro, and Judy Pfaff. I began funding a chair to encourage local artists such as Helen Miranda Wilson, Marge Piercy, and Paul Bowen to teach for a week or two.

The heart of the programs was always the talented and loyal returning faculty and devoted staff, ever there to be leaned upon, to give advice, and always to inspire.

My lucky star was shining bright the day Mary Stackhouse applied for the job of director. I would like to thank Mary for the grand job she has done in always bringing Castle Hill forward and making us better.

As much as I enjoyed those years it is fun to sit back and observe the Center's continued growth under its excellent new leader Carol Green.

Castle Hill, as we like to say, is good in all seasons. ■

Penelope Jencks's Eleanor Roosevelt

BY ELEANOR MUNRO

One day in the near future, after it has been cast in bronze, patinated, joined to its granite support, and conveyed to Manhattan, Penelope Jencks's memorial sculpture of Eleanor Roosevelt will be installed in its permanent standing-place, a ring of meadowgrass and pin oaks by Riverside Park on the city's West Side. At its back then will be the Hudson River, the Palisades, and sunset. It will face sunrise and the East-West streets and North-South avenues of New York. So the eight-foot-tall figure will serve as a groman for the huge sundial that is Manhattan island and will mark not only the daylight hours but the months as the sun cuts its way from side street to street and the seasons change. Clever children will no doubt learn to tell the time by the shadow this great woman will cast as the sun drifts over her meditative head.

Jencks is a sculptor in the new realist style, whose earlier projects stand in New England, Pittsburgh, and Ohio. With this commission she enters a wider national scene. No contemporary American woman artist has been commissioned to make a comparable work, and in New York City, so rich in political anecdote and public art, only three free-standing sculptures have thus far represented female subjects. These are, ludicrously enough, Alice in Wonderland, Joan of Arc, and Mother Goose (a few works, mostly abstract, by women stand here and there, among them Louise Nevelson's "Night Presence" on Park Avenue, while a few nymphs and angels, sisters to the Statue of Liberty, add 19-century grace-notes to the city's bridges and office buildings).

The Eleanor Roosevelt Memorial Project was the brain-child of Herbert Zohn, a Riverside Drive resident and long admirer of Mrs. R., as she was often known to her friends. It was funded by members of her extended family and thousands of supporters including individuals, foundations, corporations and—especially likely to have pleased her—labor unions and The New York State Department of Transportation. The collective effort was, of course, appropriate, for Mrs. R. famously lent herself to many progressive groups in her lifetime. Indeed, through much of this wracked century of war and economic anguish, she served as a kind of enabling mother-figure for those who needed her, beginning with those "disadvantaged to the point of alienation from American society—the sharecropper, the unemployed, the Negro." Those words, from Joseph P. Lash's 1964 biography, may sound dated today, but conditions on some of New York's streets now are not so different from those in Riverside Drive's shanty-towns in the 1930s, and Mrs. R.'s iconic presence here in

bronze should remind the city, the nation, and perhaps the world how much remains to be healed.

Yet Eleanor Roosevelt was also a woman of contradictions, loved and reviled, respected and ridiculed. For all her hunger for friendship and the power of influence, she held people at a distance. Her reserve, as recent studies by Blanche Wiesen Cook and Doris Kearns Goodwin have pointed out, stemmed from a troubled childhood with an alcoholic father and a mother who died young, leaving her daughter psychologically abandoned until she made good women friends late in life. Even earlier, settled happiness eluded her when her marriage decayed into a platonic arrangement. But these hard circumstances were turned to positive good as she set about inventing an extraordinarily effective public persona.

"I had such a sense of identity with her," Jencks said when we talked in her Cape Cod studio last autumn. She was speaking not of background but of foreground style and ideas. Like her subject, Jencks is a rangy, willful, vibrant woman who speaks in self-assured gusts that give way to bouts of self-doubt. "Her background was so much more gruesome than mine, and she rose above it. I was moved and inspired and felt a personal identification. And her politics was part of what I admired about her."

Some of the interest of Jencks's portrait then, must lie in its contradictions. The image in the artist's mind—the maquette she offered the commission jury in 1987—was deceptively simple. It was of an older woman in impersonal, body-concealing clothes, leaning against a rock whose significance was structural but could also be symbolic. Clearly, to show a dynamo like Mrs. R. in lonely introspection was a risky notion, and Jencks spent a good deal of time debating whether to show her standing alone or seated in a cluster of children. She chose the more passive pose but sharpened it with a gesture which can be deconstructed to reveal several levels of meaning.



The gesture comes straight from an early sculpture, a figure-group Jencks developed in stages between 1978 and 1982 and exhibited in several forms in Boston, New York, and at Brandeis. It includes a number of lifesize terracotta nude and clothed figures mounted in a bed of sand—in one case, lying in water—as if by a beach. Two middle-aged women stand among the young, one naked under an open robe, the other wearing a cover-all beach-dress. The latter leans her chin on one hand and looks into the distance in a way that struck one critic as "eerie . . . ghostly." The gesture, Jencks told me, "was one of those mysterious things that happen: when the model took that pose, it was right. It had universal meaning." When I asked her what the meaning might be, she answered, "if I could say what it is in words I wouldn't make a sculpture."

The theme of *Beach Figures* is a Proustian memory from the artist's childhood. Jencks is one of those lucky people who came to the Outer Cape as a child with her free-minded, liberal, somewhat bohemian parents who built a house on the remote, heavily wooded enclave of Bound Brook Island in Wellfleet back in 1939. In those sheltered but ominous pre-War days, passels of modernist artists—European immigrants and old New England nabobs, Jews and agnostical Christians, all sharing a German-Romantic arcadian philosophy and disdain for middlebrow lifestyles—swam, argued, and sunbathed, naked, on the Atlantic beaches of the Outer Cape. "In my childhood nudity was considered just regular," Jencks remembers. "We'd all go to the beach nude—such a sight! people naked on the beach had a feeling of rightness then. The sand-sun-nude-bodies seemed all of a piece. But there came a moment, when I was around 12, when I considered it complicated. To a child, your own body is normal, neat and tidy. But grownups are bigger. Floppy. Then you see ideal bodies in movies and so on, and you realize real bodies are nothing like the ideal. And you don't want others to see your flaws."

So the natural paradise, as we knew already, holds its germ of self-doubt, and much of Jencks' imagery has flowed from that remembered panorama of naked figures beset by brooding thoughts even in a pleasurable world. Expanding on Jencks' own words, I take it the gesturing woman addresses the tentative hesitation some people feel before display of mature sexuality. On another level, she and the other figures in their various ages and conditions suggest the realities of aging and the oncomingness of death. To these anxieties, the stable harmonies of nature offer a degree of solace, and Jencks' sand-colored terracotta figures rooted in sand surely suggest that for the thoughtful viewer.

It seems interesting to me, then, that these three linked sub-themes in Jencks's previous work should find re-embodiment now in her representation of a historic figure of famously

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT BY PENELOPE JENCKS

guarded sexuality, indomitable public presence, and motherly humanity. And the course Jencks followed in developing her portrait of Mrs. R. led, in a kind of parallel curve, from uncertainty and discouragement to understanding, a sequence followed more than once during the making of the memorial to Eleanor Roosevelt.

Jencks's family pioneered in that kind of persistent, sequential thinking. Her mother began her working life as a scientist in the Woods Hole laboratory of her father, biologist Raymond Pearl. After marrying, she made a conventional switch to work more compatible with child-rearing. It was painting. Jencks's father was a pianist and composer, and a graduate of the Peabody Institute in Baltimore. He developed an obsessive way of laying out his music by measuring the seconds and nanoseconds between notes with a metronome. As a child, Jencks heard his note-measuring with awe at the same time as she heard him wish his music to be *natural*, "like the wind, the ocean. Like breathing. Though of course no one breathes in 4/4 time. Waves don't break to a metronome."

Penelope, second of three children (her elder half-brother is a scientist; her younger brother a well-known architect and postmodern essayist), was a delicate child who spent a good deal of time in bed, where she amused herself with clay and crayons and was read to by her mother from *Treasure Island*, *King Arthur*, and other classics illustrated by Pyle and Wyeth. Also, after taking her to one doctor or another in New York, Mrs. Jencks would hold out some kind of treat, a play or museum visit or, once, to young Penelope's dismay, a daunting pony-ride. To hear the daughter speak is to feel the mother's character, both women forceful and opinionated, both trying and failing, as daughters and mothers do, to balance love and resistance. "We got off on the wrong foot," Jencks once put it. "I may have made her feel like a bad mother."

Of regular schooling Penelope had little until she went to the Rudolph Steiner School in High Mowing, New Hampshire. There, for the first time, she found "a handle" to master her studies and, as it would turn out, her life. The handle was art history, especially Egyptian sculpture because it seemed real, not idealized. It seemed "natural." After two years at Swarthmore, however, she "got into a bit of a panic about what I wanted to be." Her mother was studying at the Art Students League in New York at the time, and Penelope was diffident about following in her footsteps. "I didn't want to be a lady artist. I had to prove I was serious." A move in that direction was a summer session with Hans Hofmann in his Provincetown school. That summer turned the key. "I'd never been in a situation where I felt such important things were being done. That he had the truth. I thought eventually I'd learn to do the things he talked about, but to get to that point I'd have to go to art school, learn to draw, paint, work from the model. In other words, I thought I'd end as an

abstract painter once I'd learned the basics. But in fact I never did go back to Hofmann, never went back to the abstract mode." Instead, Jencks chose the art program at Boston University where she studied the gamut of academic painting: still-life, figures, interiors. In 1958 she married the painter Sidney Hurwitz and, over the next couple of years, began to experiment, on her own, with sculpture, making small clay works—heads, figures, even landscapes with figures. In sculpture, innocence was liberating: "I felt freer in sculpture because I hadn't really studied it. I found I could work more intuitively. I had the freedom to make my own mistakes."

Eventually she and Hurwitz settled in Newton, MA, and started their family. Her studio was in the attic of their house, and she had a small kiln in the basement. Like many beginners, she began in the shadow of artists she'd known, in her case Cape painters Hofmann and Edwin Dickinson and Boston sculptor Harold Tovish. But from the outset, her imagery was personal, and her themes and methods would soon focus and lead the way into a professional life.

Jencks started with studies of sleeping women and children, maybe because she liked their naturally relaxed poses. Around the same time, she made a series based on her own face in various contortions, like the work of the 18th-century eccentric sculptor, F.X. Messerschmitt. What she liked to catch were the physical signs of personality, a certain awkwardness, odd gestures, the lift of a hand or the special turn of a foot.

"Terra cotta interested me a lot then. At one point, when I was still working in the attic, I'd made a life-size reclining figure, too big to fire. Potters said I'd never be able to work it out. But I wanted to make the figures even bigger. If I'd studied academic sculpture, I don't think I'd ever have made the moves I did. But with terra cotta, I had to invent my own way." Her method at first was to build the small figures solid without armatures, then cut them apart and hollow out the cores so the pieces could be fired. The reclining figure became simply too large to take to the basement, so she took it apart and fired the elements individually. As the scale of the work grew, she began building armatures out of metal rods and wood dowels together with clay struts, then applying clay for the surface texture. Hunting for adequate space as the scale of her work grew, she moved to ever larger studios in Somerville and Cambridge. In 1975 she took a needed break from family responsibilities for a stint of concentrated work at the MacDowell Colony. She went back several times and there, in stretches of intensely focused work, really got her large-scale program under way.

Her first resolved works of the late 1970s were life-size standing women in floor-length, concealing robes and dresses. Their poses were relaxed and their mood uniformly bland, but the faces and hair were distinctly characterized, seemingly based on live models. In a 1973 interview with Marion Perry, Jencks explained what she'd been after: "a static, formal quality . . . very straight, ordinary, ungraceful, unflowing, flat-

footed . . . whatever position [a model] happens to fall into." This static quality gives sculpture a monumentality which can contain either the restless gesture or the peculiar grimace. The contrast between the grim face and the contained form of the overall piece provides a tension I find interesting." One group of the women was shown at the Landmark Gallery in New York in 1977.

That year Jencks won a Massachusetts Artists Foundation Award, moved to a yet more spacious studio in South Boston and acquired a six-foot kiln. These preparations would culminate four years later in the beach-scene of life-size naked terra-cotta figures.

An artist's struggle to break out of confining old techniques can bring a birth of new imagery. These new images frequently stem from childhood memories which work to that point had failed to tap. The source of Jencks's new imagery would be those remembered summers on the beaches of Cape Cod. Compared to the early standing and clothed figures, these new ones, naked, would be "a little more relaxed," Jencks said. "Not so frontal, so Egyptian." For instance, the bodies of two young women drowsing in sand are twisted in a relaxed way, while another perches on a sort of pier. Other figures sit, lie and kneel in mildly oblique ways. Also, as we now know, the new group addresses a complex of moral issues. The new groupings of *Beach Figures* were shown in New York, Boston, and the Rose Art Gallery at Brandeis and caused a stir. In fact the tension between hyper-realistic anatomy and freighted mood was what aroused interest. Robert Taylor of the *Boston Globe* compared the work to Picasso's and mentioned especially the tall clothed figure—prototype of Mrs. R.—which "leans forward gravely pondering" the scene. Christine Temin in the same paper said how strange it was to see "real people, stripped not only of their clothes but of the dignity of the traditional sculpted figure." These sculptures, she said, "almost inspire fear. Instead of wanting to touch them, the viewer feels a strong desire to remain at a distance."

Other commissions for sculpture groups followed, including for Toledo, Ohio, in 1984 and Brandeis University in 1986. Then in the fall of '87, Boston sculptors Nancy Webb and Marianna Pineda urged Jencks to enter the national competition for a memorial sculpture to Eleanor Roosevelt. She did so, and in 1988 her maquette was chosen from 10 finalists. During the next year, while funds for the project were being raised, she met to work out details with the New York Landmarks Commission and Parks Department, and by July of '92 the contract was in.

For her proposal for the Memorial Competition, Jencks read biographies and Roosevelt's writings and visited the Roosevelt home in Hyde Park, NY. But she found a more telling clue to Mrs. R.'s inner life in Rock Creek Park in Washington DC, where Augustus St. Gaudens' haunt-

ing bronze figure, "Grief," marks the grave of Henry Adams's wife Clover, who took her own life. In his *Autobiography of Henry Adams*, the author wrote about the sculpture, comparing its overtones of perennial meaning with what he considered the vapid character of his world. In her turn, Mrs. Roosevelt confessed she often left the White House to spend time in the presence of that somber memorial. Jencks believes she sought consolation there and also courage to survive the kind of political and emotional struggles that destroyed Clover.

"I am trying to capture a sense of peace and strength," Jencks wrote in her proposal to the Memorial committee, "a brooding, pensive woman leaning against a rock, not quite seated, her hand under her chin (as she so often held it) gazing thoughtfully out into the park. In spite of her tremendous energy and activity, I believe that her true strength came from an inner searching, an almost overwhelming honesty, and a conviction that mankind has the ability (and desire) to 'do the right thing' if only that thing can be discovered. I would like to be able to capture this feeling."

That rock against which Mrs. R. leans, "not quite seated," functions both as material and metaphor. If it refers to Rock Creek Park, it must also represent the depth of mute suffering Mrs. R. brought to that place and the weight of resolution she took from it. The Japanese sculptor Isamu Noguchi once put it that "stone is a direct link to the heart of matter—a molecular link. When I tap it, I get the echo of that which we are—in the solar plexus—in the center of gravity of matter. Then the whole universe has a resonance." For Jencks, too, stone seems to have meaning as the revealed inner resonance of a figure. For her 1982 memorial monument to Samuel Eliot Morrison, which stands on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, she knew in advance what she wanted: "something triangular in shape, sloping down in back and cut off in front to suggest the coast of Maine, which Morrison loved." A 20-ton boulder from Westerly, RI, did the job. In 1986, for a figure of a student before the Farber Library in Brandeis (her daughter Erica posed for the figure), Jencks searched quarries and demolition sites around Weston, MA, and finally found the right seven-ton rock in the town dump. But the quest for the perfect rock-support is not always successful. For the Morrison work, Jencks told me, "the rock was the driving force behind the composition. I could take any rock and adapt the figure to it. But Mrs. Roosevelt had to dominate the rock, and I couldn't find the rock!"

"I started looking in October of '92. Originally it was supposed to be of Manhattan schist, indigenous to New York. So for a while I stayed in New York in a friend's apartment and tried to track local rocks. I found out from the Department of Transportation where they were blasting. I got a guy from the Parks Commission to drive me up and down the Hudson River. I looked at rocks in breakwaters and out by the



ELEANOR ROOSEVELT BY PENELOPE JENCKS

Tappan Zee bridge where big construction was going on. I took my sculpture stand, calipers, measuring stick, plasticine, and a calculator to figure scale: one and a half inch to one foot." That way, she could turn out small-scale models—"what I called rock portraits"—and from time to time, she'd travel to New York and try out the shapes on three-foot-high garbage cans. "But I couldn't find a real one."

By November, Jencks was hunting through quarries in Connecticut. "By then it was snowing. I cut the fingers off my gloves so I could make the rock-models. It was cold! And it was the hunting season, so I made a lot of noise, singing, turning the car radio up loud." After Christmas, the quest for the rock took Jencks to Western Massachusetts around the Quabbin reservoir. "It was fun. I trooped through blizzards, brushing snow off the rocks, measuring, measuring. And we found beautiful rocks everywhere, the ones taken out of fields in the early days for walls—subtle rounded shapes with lichen, patina, and so on. But then when I'd put a little figure of Eleanor Roosevelt beside those rocks, it looked like a casual afterthought, whereas I wanted her to look monumental.

"In the end any fool could see I had to fabricate the rock. So in May of '93, I abandoned the search and decided to make a plaster model and have it carved of granite. But then when I set out to fabricate the rock, I had trouble making a shape that was believable and consistent with the design. It took from mid-July till the end of December 1993, to resolve its shape. And I still wasn't building the figure."

In the spring of '93 Jencks had moved with her equipment to the Cape, ready to start enlarging the 30-inch tall maquette to its final eight-foot scale. "I wasn't worried. It had never taken me more than 18 months to complete a

work. I hired my son Adam to help build an armature. We were enlarging with points and plumb lines, and building an armature for the rock too." That took a while, and in the autumn, Hurwitz had to begin teaching in Boston, so Jencks decided to stay. "I thought I'd be done by Christmas. I put in a furnace here on the Cape and stayed on alone. It was very beautiful. Quiet. I wasn't nervous, though it was kind of lonely. I'd grown up here, alone in the big house from the age of seven, and Bound Brook is a benign place."

Time went by as Jencks worked out the relationship between the full-scale figure and the maquette for the rock. By January, the full-scale wood armature for the figure was in place against the finished rock model and Jencks began applying a top layer of clay to represent flesh. "I thought I'd knock it off in a month or two. But then a new problem came up.

"I realized there was an unnatural configuration to the relationship between shoulders and neck. I tried to fix it by working more on that area. But I realized it's really not possible to sit the way I'd imagined her. It's anatomically impossible. Nobody is proportioned that way. Yet I wanted it to look natural!"

Early on, Jencks had accumulated stacks of photographs of Mrs. R. and pinned them onto big poster-boards, hoping they would make up for the absence of the living woman. The photographs showed Mrs. R. in all kinds of hats, wearing orchids, smiling, seen from the front, from the side. And her hair was dressed in all manner of ways. But these static, two-dimensional, black-and-white glimpses couldn't substitute for the coherent grace in motion of a real person, and Jencks began using models to help her correct errors she felt she'd fallen into by working intuitively instead of from life. A favorite presence in the studio in those days was Phoebe Roosevelt, whose bodystructure closely resembled her great grandmother's. She and Jencks became close friends along the way, and their conversations helped summon the real woman into the studio. Jencks's daughter Erica was another good model. "She and I have a wonderful relationship. I love having her in the studio. I can work better with her there. Also there was my aunt! Her hands. She has incredible hands—thin, bent, expressive. And Erica's legs, ankles, feet. So by fall of '94, I expected I was done.

"And then, just about then, I got to a point and realized it wasn't at all what I'd wanted. I looked at the figure in its coat and it even looked a little like a turtle. I realized I was kind of *lost*."

Sometimes an artist's plan for a project simply dissolves and the whole thing falls apart. Then the most laboriously assembled details and procedures fail to support what once seemed the perfect solution to the problem. Most artists and writers understand this and know there is only

D. FLAX

PROVINCETOWN

PROVINCETOWN

PROVINCETOWN

PROVINCETOWN

PROVINCETOWN

PROVINCETOWN

PROVINCETOWN

PROVINCETOWN

PROVINCETOWN

PROVINCETOWN

PROVINCETOWN

214 COMMERCIAL STREET

American and European
Fine Jewelry and Crystal



LALIQUE
Baccarat
Orrefors
PAIRPOINT
SAINT LOUIS
SWAROVSKI
HOYA

167 Commercial Street
Provincetown
(508) 487-2504 • MA 800-339-2504
Free Shipping
OPEN YEAR ROUND

one way out: take the project back to bare bones and its primal inspiration, and start again.

When I visited Jencks's studio in November of '95, the full-size, unfinished figure of Eleanor Roosevelt held center place. But in a corner, only partly covered in a dropcloth, stood another figure of uncanny strangeness and dominating visual power, also eight-feet tall but starkly naked, its bone-white plaster flesh torn and pocked as if by time or disease. However, save for the outer skin or clothes of the two figures, they were shockingly alike, each with the same narrow shoulders, heavy breasts, and unusually long legs and feet, elongations pronounced to the point of distortion. "The elongations and distortions came from the direction I was moving in then," Jencks said when I asked her about those features as they appeared in the Roosevelt figure. "I was moving this way at the time."

In fact, the figure in the corner is a representation of Jencks's mother, who died in 1992 of Alzheimer's disease. "My mother died in a nursing home," Jencks explained. "We'd had a difficult relationship early on, like walking on stones. But when she got Alzheimer's, we became so close. I'd done a lot of grieving, watching her slip away, and during that period, I decided to make the figure. She was the more visual person in our house, the more liberated one. It was she who went naked in the house."

The figure, so large and oddly configured, is meant to be seen as if "from the eye-level of a child." It is one of a new group Jencks started while she was waiting for the Roosevelt contract to come through. Eventually she plans 12 figures on the same scale, a group to "remind me of what it was like to be a child among naked adults."

By the time I saw the twin figures in proximity, a solution to the anatomical puzzles of the one had evidently aided in the solving of the other. But back in '94, Jencks's crisis of confidence had been painful. "It was an incredible cataclysm in my life. I decided the sculpture was really bad. I just hadn't done it. And to contemplate a second year on the Cape, alone in the studio, was too much to bear. The first year there'd been snowdrifts, ice floes in the bay. But this time it was very hard emotionally."

"Already, I realized what was wrong. I'd still been working out of my imagination, still working on the outer garment, the coat, instead of stripping the figure back to the bones. So the second year, I worked eight-to-10-hour days, trying to cram it all in. It became an obsession. But by then I was working from nude models. Working from the nude is different. There, I know where I am."

As it happened, with the nude model before her (and perhaps her mother's figure in her mind), Jencks quickly saw the problem. It was simply, as she put it, "the way the fanny is attached to the rock. I had to figure how to position the butt and the pelvis. I made complicated measurements and diagrams of the legs' relationship to the hips and the hips' to the rock."

"Step by step, I raised the top of the rock and tilted the lower hips and legs. One model's legs

SMALL PLEASURES Antique Jewelry

OPEN
YEAR ROUND

359 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
Telephone: (508) 487-3712

BAGARRI



Hand Blown Glass
Photography
Art • Antiques
Collectibles

151 Commercial Street
Provincetown MA 02657
508-487-6868 508-487-8248

SHANK PAINTER COMPANY, INC.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1974

- QUALITY OFFSET PRINTING
- FAX/COPY CENTER
- WEB SERVICES
- COLOR PRINTS/COPIES
- COMPUTER SERVICES
- BULK MAILING
- UPS SHIPPING

spc@CapeCodAccess.com
508 487 1709 • fax 487 4791
100 Shank Painter Road
Provincetown



Merchants Hall 359

*"Great little Shops
by the Bay..."*

Steppin' Out

Adina

Little Gorgeous Things

Yvette's Cassettes

& Didi's CD's

Magic Rice

Spa Skincare

Atlantis

Cottage Traders East

Harbor Arts

Mews Courtyard
359 Commercial St
487-6171

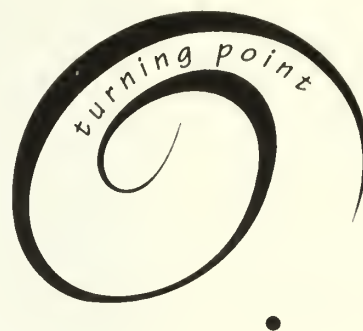
fitted into another's ass and that into another's back. In the end, a young poet's ass served as Eleanor's. Finally, I pushed the butt forward, and it began to work."

Along the way Jencks even turned out a couple of test-runs of the First Lady stripped to a motherly combination of garters and underwear. These tender, not at all disrespectful, riffs on the dignity of high position suggest that the bonds between an artist, her subject, and her progenetrix, actual or cultural, will never be fully unwound. Simply, they exist in a continuity which, once understood, sustained this artist to the end of the project. Eleanor Roosevelt, perhaps mindful of her own sadly unfulfilled need for such a guiding influence, once wrote, "It does not hurt to worship at a shrine which is quite unconscious, for out of it may grow an inner development in yourself."

By the spring of '96, the full-scale clay figure was finally done and cast into plaster. Several months were devoted to fitting the plaster figure to the plaster rock, then making rubber and wax molds for the final casting, to be done at the Paul King Foundry in Providence, RI. Meanwhile, master stone-cutter Giuliano Cecchinelli in Barre, VT, set to work on the long-sought granite support.

Originally, Jencks had wanted the figure to stand inside the park, but the New York Landmarks Commission decided against borrowing from the limited acreage of metropolitan parkland. So the landscaping firm of Bruce Kelly and David Varnell, which designed the John Lennon memorial, Strawberry Fields, in Central Park, laid out the site at the confluence of streets, avenue, and river, in the same urban-intellectual neighborhood that nurtured many of Eleanor Roosevelt's friends in her lifetime. The sculpture's setting in that grove of pine oaks may remind some people of Cape Cod, from where the artist took her image. Others may think of the shrines of certain Mediterranean mother-goddesses, an insight supported by the towering but open form of the figure, which enfolds a matriarchal mythology personal to the artist but with larger resonance—trust in natural common sense to guide creative choices. For still others, the work may function as that groman I spoke of, focus for meditation on cycling time and the events of a century. There is no need to choose among references. All are authentic and add to the work's density. As much as any woman of her time, Mrs. R. embodied the archetype, and Penelope Jencks has given it living new form. ■

Eleanor Munro is the author of Originals: American Women Artists and Memoir of a Modernist's Daughter, among other books and articles. She lives in New York and summers in Truro.



FORMERLY **SQUARE ONE**

Featuring
Designer Clothing
and Accessories

379 COMMERCIAL STREET
PROVINCETOWN
508 487 0642



GLOBAL GIFTS

249 Commercial St., Provincetown, MA
1 Court St., Plymouth, MA
(508) 487-3524 / (508) 746-0408
OPEN ALL YEAR



FRITZ BULTMAN, 1982, PHOTO RENATE PONSOLD

*Myron's subtle presence was mirrored in his art, and though he epitomized refinement, he also could be—among friends—raucous, casual, and ebullient. Fritz was the stout one, reminding me, thinking of it now, of a miniature version of William Styron (perhaps it is their Southerness) and the Pablo Neruda character in that Italian movie *Il Postino*. Myron could be as austere as the Greek playwright Aeschylus while Fritz had the more humanitarian urges of Sophocles.*

Fritz Bultman and Myron Stout: A Provincetown Memoir



MYRON STOUT, 1983, PHOTO RENATE PONSOLD

BY MICHAEL STEPHENS

A work by Robert Frank caught my attention at the Whitney Museum. Though it was a photographic collage from the 1980s, the actual photographs predated the piece by several decades. It was of the artists on Tenth Street, one of them my old friend from Provincetown, the painter Myron Stout. The Myron I had known was an elegant, older man, but one who was a great mentor to younger artists. Both of these Myron Stouts—the young one in the photograph and the older one I knew—were quite hip, though. In the Frank photograph, Myron wore an overcoat and a fedora and a cigarette dangled from his mouth. When I met Myron in the late 60s, he had long ago left the chaotic art world of New York for the slower, easier one of Provincetown. On the Cape, he was an elder statesman, everyone's favorite uncle, the person you most wanted to come to your house for dinner or drinks. He might still show up in a fedora and overcoat but the cigarette did not hang so defiantly from his mouth, and all his edges had been smoothed and polished; he was the definition of what one meant by "mellow."

Myron was discriminating yet anything but a snob. What he had were his routines and his own close set of friends whose houses he frequented like clockwork. I'd see him at either his own house on Brewster Street or, more often than not, at the Bultman's house around the corner on Miller Hill Road. In fact, for me to remember Myron, I also think of Fritz and Jeanne Bultman. Fritz and Myron were two very different people, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They also had much in common, not just a love of practicing art; both men were rigorous intellectuals. Then, too, Myron and Fritz were Southerners, genteel, urbane, exquisitely mannered, and seemingly with infinite grace in the social world.

"Since Fritz and Myron are gone," Jeanne Bultman told me, "there is no one to carry on

those conversations that they used to have about Greek art, mythology, and the classical world."

Though they had differences about art, friends, books, food, ideas, and life itself, their friendship was long and enduring, and it was steadfast through the more than two decades I knew them. Like that Robert Frank photograph of him, Myron was cool, perhaps the coolest, most understated person I've ever known. On the other hand, Fritz was a volcanic personality, a constant eruption of feelings and opinions, though these moods were shared with his calmer, even courtly self. Let me say from the outset that Myron and Fritz were two of the nicest people I ever knew. Though their manners in public were quite different—Myron was thin, even wraith-like at times; Fritz was short and squat, a combination Buddha-belly and epicure's physique—and their manners of making art seemed almost diametrically opposed, theirs was, as I said, a lasting friendship that seemed to be built on mutual respect.

"Take some strawberries," Fritz called out as I left their house, and Jeanne would lead me off to the patch where they grew in her garden.

Fritz was short and round while his wife, Jeanne, a former dancer, was tall and slim. This created a marvelous visual image when they walked together. In many respects they were the perfect Provincetown couple, odd and perfectly right.

"Eat more asparagus," scolded Fritz when I stayed in their guest house. "They'll only go to seed if you don't eat them."

Then, of course, there was Myron, offering a last glass of wine or a shot of whiskey or one of his Gauloise cigarettes, the culprits of the emphysema and cancer that eventually killed him.

Myron's subtle presence was mirrored in his art, and though he epitomized refinement, he also could be—among friends—raucous, casual, and ebullient. Fritz was the stout one, reminding me, thinking of it now, of a miniature ver-

sion of William Styron (perhaps it is their Southernness) and the Pablo Neruda character in that Italian movie *Il Postino*. Myron could be as austere as the Greek playwright Aeschylus while Fritz had the more humanitarian urges of Sophocles. His mind was sharp and quick, but Fritz's demeanor could be slow, even ponderous in its gait, even as his art and life reflected a personality full of twists and angles, one that was electric and malleable.

Fritz and Myron might not be joined in any art history texts because their art forms were so different. But in my own mind I forever associate them because I usually saw one of them when I was visiting the other. Jeanne often served as the catalytic agent, inviting all of us to her table for a sumptuous meal.

I met these two artists when I was in my early 20s. A cocky young writer who had already sold a book to a major publisher, it was hard for me to respect anyone in the older generations, especially those who might offer literary opinions. For me, though, Myron and Fritz were unique; they were visual intelligences who were two of the best-read and genuinely erudite people I had yet met and though young, I had made the acquaintance of many writers. I used to think that, between them, there was not a single book not read. And their tastes were broad and eclectic; Fritz might mention the French historian Braudel while Myron, in the midst of a disquisition about Greek art, might allude to Louis L'Amour, the prolific cowboy pulp fiction writer whom Myron adored, even going so far as to catalogue and cross-reference the characters in 60 or so novels, or to put it in Myron's own voice, "the Sacketts and what-not."

Fritz regularly loaned me copies from his personal library, including a translation of Baudelaire by Delmore Schwartz and a fascinating book called *The Life of the Fly*, the observations of a French scientist, the Abbé Fabre, too poor, it seemed, to do anything but observe the life of the insects around him. Then, too, Fritz read his contemporaries and neighbors, writers such as Norman Mailer or B.H. Friedman, poets such as Stanley Kunitz, and Wellfleet rascals like Edmund Wilson. I first heard of John McPhee, for instance, while Fritz animatedly walked, at the end of the work day, on Harry Kemp Way, telling me about McPhee's latest literary nonfiction work in the *New Yorker*.

I often wondered how Fritz had time to practice his art with all the reading he did; he readily admitted that he was a slow reader, but a steady one, and he seemed to absorb texts exceedingly well.

"We all read a lot," Jeanne Bultman said, "but Fritz and Myron retained so much more than any of us. They could sit around talking so clearly about what it was they read."

I met Fritz and Myron in the late '60s when I moved to Provincetown from New York. I had sold a novel to Grove Press, and with the money, came to the Cape for the winter in order to hide out. Literally, I had to hide out because I had a warrant for my arrest in New York after I had punched someone in the nose after he stole my

former girlfriend, and neither of them appreciated my behavior. In fact, the ex-girlfriend had broken a bottle of wine over my head after I knocked out her new beau. The novelist Rudolph Wurlitzer, who had then just published his novel *Nog*, suggested that I go to the Cape. Though he was a friend of Fritz and Myron, initially he didn't tell me to look up Fritz but rather his son Anthony, who was my age and lived on the Cape with his wife Lynn. His wife frequently modeled for Fritz, and in fact, the day I stopped by Fritz's studio, he was inside drawing Lynn and another statuesque P-town beauty by the name of Tacke. Instantly I went back to my room on Commercial Street and wrote a poem about this remarkable event; Fritz wound up using it in a catalogue for a show later on, and we immediately became lifelong friends.

Of course, it did not hurt the friendship that we both were lapsed Catholics. I've always thought that the speech rhythms of New Orleans and Brooklyn—the latter where I originated—were highly compatible. Not to mention that Fritz was a terrific draftsman with his nude drawings, a wonderful collagist, and a highly skilled sculptor, besides having a lacerating wit, a sense of high camp—oh the way he could lash into someone beginning with the word, "Honey," and then lambast away—and an abiding dedication to irony.

The Fine Arts Work Center was a new operation, and Fritz invited me one chilly fall evening to a get-together for the fellows and staff at a local restaurant, and that is where I met Myron. As with Fritz, I took an instant liking to Myron, and the feeling seemed mutual, and we were friends from that moment until he died nearly 20 years later. He and the writer Rudy Wurlitzer were friends, so very often, being a junior member to this community, my introduction to everyone was that I was a friend of Rudy's. The year before he and I had been fellows at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire. A few years later, we would share the same editor at E.P. Dutton, the New York publisher. Eventually, living in Provincetown, I became Michael, their friend, though several years later, I remember a friend of Rudy's staying at Myron's apartment on Brewster Street and burning a hole with her cigarette in his mattress, and finding—I can't remember exactly why now—that the whole event smacked of the extraordinary because, one, someone was staying at Myron's, and, two, she had burnt his mattress.

Fritz was a collector of animal horns, and they decorated the furniture and walls of all his houses. But with Myron, I think of magnifying glasses, particularly as he got older, as his meticulous, tiny, graphite drawings needed magnification to be seen and worked on with his vision slowly fading away. In fact, one of the last times I saw Myron, he was using a large black-handled magnifying glass which I told him I admired.

"Take it," he said.

"I can't take it," I answered.

"Please," he said, handing it to me, "please take it as a gift."

Later, I thought the gift both odd and apt, so Myron, if you will. For both Myron and Fritz had Borgesian streaks in their personalities, being curators of the obscure, the recondite, but also admirers of simple, elegant objects. Like horns. Like a magnifying glass.

Both men held contradictions: they were reclusive, scholarly, and creative; they were also deeply social beings. They loved food and drink, and indulged in these pleasures often. Both used drugs to various degrees and for various reasons. Fritz had to take opium for his stomach after he lost a good deal of his intestines in an operation; Myron, an old hipster underneath that first appearance of being one's favorite schoolmarm, took drugs recreationally and smoked pot at the end of his life because he wasn't able to drink.

At Myron's apartment, he had many vials of different grades and types of marijuana, with its effects noted, too. He liked speed to keep him going and to ward off depression, but was also known to ingest hallucinogens such as psilocybin. Sometimes I found his penchant for drugs an affectation, a way to identify with young people. But I have no doubt that Myron also liked to get high. Ultimately, both Fritz and Myron were fine wine drinkers. Dinner at the Bultmans was one of the rarest of treats for me, and I dined at their homes in Provincetown and New York countless times in a 20-year period. At Myron's, the parties were peopled with friends crowded into his tiny apartment, the drinks—Southern hospitality style—always flowing. You could never finish a drink at Myron's because it was always being replenished by him or someone helping him out for the evening.

"Stay for one last glass," Myron would say.

"Take some strawberries," Fritz called out...

I would reel home after a party at Myron's because I never could keep track of my drinking. The glass was always full; it was always too early to go home. "Stay for one last glass," Myron would say. But every time I sipped a little from that one drink, he filled it up again, so that I would lose track of just how much liquor I had consumed. At the Bultman's, I would drink continuously from a little glass, glass after glass, all night long, and more than once, unable to navigate down the winding, forested path from the top of their porch to Miller Hill Road or the cottage down below, I fell into the bushes, disappearing among the vines, laughing all the way, while Fritz and Jeanne's hearty laughs bounced off the porch above.

To understand Fritz I often thought one had to contemplate that house on the hill. Though it never failed to impress me with its elegance, really it was the simplest of designs, no more than raw building blocks with a few strategically placed windows. The house seemed enormous, but it was only two rooms. But what rooms they were! Each was long and narrow, and parti-

UTILITIES

393 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
Tel/Fax (508) 487.6800

Interior Accents

349-7764
Truro Center

Full Interior Design Service

**Custom Window Decor
Wall & Floor Finishes
Upholstery & Slipcovers
Cabinetry & Accessories**

**Consultation Service
Available**

**Depot Rd. & Rt. 6A
Truro, MA 02666**

tioned; they were placed on the hill, if seen from a bird's eye, in a step pattern, the entrance to the house on the porch leading into where the two rooms were joined at their furthest points.

The front room was given over to socializing. It was where the kitchen was, a room laid out by Jeanne who once worked with Michael Field and was as good a cook as anyone I'd ever met, and it led into the dining room. Books were everywhere in pale wooden cases that had streaks of white paint over them. A door led out onto a deck with the best view in Provincetown. Though the dining room was small, even cramped, it created the illusion of being airy and immense, while also conveying intimacy when everyone sat around the table to dine.

Dining was not just eating. It meant talking about art, literature, and, of course, lots of gossip about people in the art world, show business, and Provincetown generally. A typical cast of dinner guests might include Myron, Ruth Latta, Bob Lawlor, Peter and Gloria Watts, and even one or two renegade outlaws, the local drug smuggler, let's say, and maybe a spiritual advisor. I never heard anyone talk about sports, but I swear that every other topic under the sun was covered in depth over all those years that I knew Fritz and Jeanne, and, of course, Myron.

Over the years, they had their feuds, and so Myron might not be present on a particular evening at the Bultman's. Though Fritz had art feuds which lasted a lifetime, he and Myron always ironed out their differences quickly.

I think that Myron probably understood Fritz a little better than Fritz understood him, though I think that Fritz probably appreciated Myron a bit more than Myron appreciated him. These, naturally, were quite discriminating differences between Southern gentlemen. When they disagreed, it was not over petty things but the subtle matters which comprised the world of art, their tastes in various painters and their work, ballets or movies, books, plays, or recitals. Eventually, all would be resolved. The old friends would be together at yet another meal prepared by the irrepressible Jeanne.

When I first met Myron and Fritz, I recall taking an autumn drive with them up Cape. Jeanne drove the Jeep that the Bultman's seemed to have for as long as I knew them. Fritz talked about the heather and the purple hue it gave off at this time of year. Myron spoke about the broom, and myself a city person, rather than ask what broom was, I waited until I got back to my room, and looked it up in the dictionary. Fritz loved nature the way a poet does, often in an ecstasy or despair about its enormity; Myron, on the other hand, was a trained botanist.

He often spoke about his years in Hawaii, teaching there. Those years often sounded like the happiest of his life. When he spoke about Hawaii, he did not sound like the great aesthete he was, but simply a man in love with a place. I thought that maybe his great love, whoever that person was, might have come from there. I think it was close to 11 years that Myron spent in the Pacific, and I wondered why he left Hawaii. Certainly, he loved the Cape, particularly Prov-

incetown, but I never heard him speak so ecstatically about New England the way he could revel in his memories of the mid-Pacific islands.

Sometimes Fritz might speak of New Orleans with the same kind of reverence that Myron bestowed on Hawaii, but that was not very often. Fritz's relationship with the South was very personal, to be sure, and usually a love-hate one. He seemed most at home, and most productive, too, on the Cape, but, of course, he worked well in New York, though I don't think he had anything like the serenity he found in Provincetown at the brownstone he owned on the East Side of Manhattan.

The brownstone was on a once déclassé street one block south of Spanish Harlem, still the Upper East Side, still chi-chi, but also with elements of a border town. Lots of writers and artists lived there, including John Ashbery, a next door neighbor. The Bultmans told me how they bought the place for a pittance after the Second World War ended. These were the brewmasters' houses for the Knickerbocker brewery, and they said that the rooms stunk of beer for years after they bought the place. The same way Fritz added to his collages he built up his houses, slowly and artfully, one thought at a time, one brushstroke, one torn piece of paper, one fine object at a time placed in a room.

At dinner parties I met designers like Charles James, that flamboyant habitué of the Chelsea Hotel and writers such as Donald Windham and Eileen Simpson. Jeanne served festive holiday turkey or Mississippi hams with hot pepper-flecked cornbread. The evening might begin in a sitting room upstairs, where drinks were served. Over the mantel, there was a marvelous John Graham portrait, while a Joseph Cornell box was mounted in another corner. The floor appeared to be painted by Jackson Pollock, for the paint stood up off the linoleum, and it seemed inspired by Pollock's technique. Once, drunkenly, I asked Fritz if Pollock indeed had painted the floor. He looked at me with a perplexed expression. Poor Michael, he seemed to say without saying it. "Larry Rivers did it," he said.

The last time I saw Fritz was several months before he died. It was not on the Cape, but at the New York house. I had come over late in the afternoon for tea because he no longer had the strength for a full evening of drinking and eating. I suppose that his lifetime of ailments, especially his stomach problems, finally caught up with him. But the fact was he did not look bad at all; in fact, he seemed well if one's lucidity were any measure of well-being. Still, he told me, "I'm not long for this world, but I've made my peace." After all, death was not something Fritz, the son of an undertaker, seemed to fear. Though a lapsed Catholic, the belief system still operated, and, as Jeanne told me years later, he went back to the Church before he died. Perhaps he thought that he would die and go to Heaven because at heart he was an optimist.

After Fritz died in 1985, I lost touch with Jeanne for awhile. I had a burgeoning theater career, and at the time of his death I had a play

on tour which eventually wound up in London and Edinburgh. Back in New York, I had a child to raise and was working as a writer, editor, and teacher around the clock, it seemed. My own problem with alcohol and drugs was at a crisis level in the mid-'80s; I don't think I properly grieved when this good friend died. Besides, I had stopped going to Provincetown, not consciously; always I was saying that I was going to get up there, but months turned into years, and I did not return. Maybe because Fritz had been dying for as long as I had known him, his death seemed anti-climactic. I almost felt as if he had not left us, that at any moment he was going to reappear, telling about this wonderful new collage he did or a great piece of plaster and wires that he needed to have cast in Long Island City to turn into a free-floating bronze sculpture. I would hear his voice in my ear, talking about Balanchine dances, avant-garde operas, odd movies that ran forever in Provincetown. Fritz was argumentative with so many people that you would expect me to recount a great rift that may have occurred between us, but the fact was he was the same way the last time I saw him as he was the first time we met—witty, charming, devilish, often wicked, but underneath it all, compassionate, civil, and ultimately profound. He was one of the most cultured persons I have ever known.

My last visit with Myron on the Cape was during the summer, a few years before I botched out from my own addictions. His blindness had become worse. He relied on a handful of people to get around and to accomplish simple chores. Still, when my wife, daughter, and I finally left his apartment, he insisted upon walking us down his street to our car. Next to us, he was fine, but when he turned to go back home, one sensed how disorienting the lack of sight must have been, and how this once familiar street had become as treacherous and unknowable as a minefield. I watched him wander off with the most heart-breaking tentative lurch. My dear old friend Myron, that brilliant artist of black-and-white works that he refined over decades, had lost the privileged sense, that most urgent one of sight. He looked too frail and vulnerable in the sunlight; his skin was bleached a pale white. He had become our blind seer. When he coughed from the emphysema, his tiny frame spasmed.

After Fritz died, I wrote to Myron a few times, and either he responded or one of his friends wrote down his dictation. His letters, even when he still had his sight, were short, pithy texts, to the point and finished. But when Myron wrote me in Hawaii in 1986, his letter was long and flowing, full of lyrical reflections upon his own life on the islands more than 40 years earlier. I can't say I was shocked when I had heard he died. I was saddened, the way I grieved—or failed to grieve fully—when I heard about Fritz. Both of these artists were considerably older than I was, and yet through most of my adult life I thought of them as my good friends. As such, they were irreplaceable, and each of them one of kind, *sui generis*. When some people die, all

that remains are their bones or their ashes. With these two artists, I saw artifacts of their brief journeys on earth. Fritz left behind his body of art, drawings, paintings, collages, and sculpture; Myron left his mysterious black-and-white paintings, diminutive yet heroic, resonating exquisitely.

For Myron, painting in black and white was not the easy way, nor was it the more difficult. It was simply the way. Fritz's way—ritualized, myth-filled, formal—was like the religion he liked to deny he cared any longer about, though he still talked about it constantly. His work was threefold: sculpture, drawings, collages. His sculpture was mythic and heroic; his analytic drawings were sensual; his collages were gorgeous.

Though I associate the pleasant noise of the social world with these two men, finally I see a spiritual connection. Their work is now just like they themselves are, no longer of the earth but of the spirit world. Neither was a moralist or a polemicist, yet looking at their work results in a sense of peace and serenity, of order and good in the universe. Their works are beautiful in very different ways, but their characters were beautiful in similar ways. ■

Michael Stephens lives in New York and teaches in the writing program at Emerson College in Boston.

The Cape Cod School of Art

-Now in its 97th year-

America's first school of Plein Air painting, established in 1899 by Charles W. Hawthorne and dedicated to his artistic philosophy and the rich legacy of Impressionistic painting

**Landscapes • Portraits • Still Life
Oils • Pastels • Watercolors**

Director Lois Griffel's paintings can be seen at the **Wohlfarth Gallery**, 234 Commercial St. or by appointment at the school. Please call, write or come by for 1995 Schedule

**THE CAPE COD SCHOOL OF ART
48 PEARL STREET • PROVINCETOWN
(508) 487-0101**

70th
Season

CAPE PLAYHOUSE

America's Most Famous Summer Theatre
DENNIS • CAPE COD • MASS.

June 24-July 6 ★ BRIGADOON, "the most magical musical of them all" by Lerner & Loewe's

July 8-July 20 ★ LOVE, JULIE, U.S. premiere of a new Australian comedy direct from England starring Pop music star **HELEN REDDY** showing off her acting talent and **MILICENT MARTIN**.

July 22-Aug. 3 ★ ANGEL STREET, **DAVID McCALLUM** (The Man from U.N.C.L.E.) and **Jean LeClerc** (All My Children) star in this Victorian thriller.

Aug. 5-Aug. 17 ★ SYLVIA, by A.R. Gurney, with **STEPHANIE ZIMBALIST**. Off-Broadway's hit comedy, can a man love his dog more than his wife?

Aug. 19-Aug. 31 ★ FIVE GUYS NAMED MOE, a musical by Clarke Peters, featuring Louis Jordan's greatest hits.

Sept. 2-Sept. 14 ★ SOCIAL SECURITY, **BONNIE FRANKLIN** (One Day at a Time), **DODY GOODMAN** (B'way revival of GREASE), and **DAVID HEDISON** (Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea) star in this hilarious comedy about what to do with mother.

Performance times are Monday through Saturday at 8pm, and Matinees Wednesday and Thursday at 2pm. Ticket prices range from \$27 to \$13. The Box Office opens June 12th for subscribers, June 14th for the general public. Season Subscriptions are still available.

CALL 508 385-3911

*Show and Stars are subject to change.



HELEN REDDY



DODY GOODMAN



DAVID HEDISON



STEPHANIE ZIMBALIST



BONNIE FRANKLIN



JEAN LeCLERC



DAVID McCALLUM



MILICENT MARTIN

MOLLY MALONE COOK

Photographs of the Extraordinary '60s

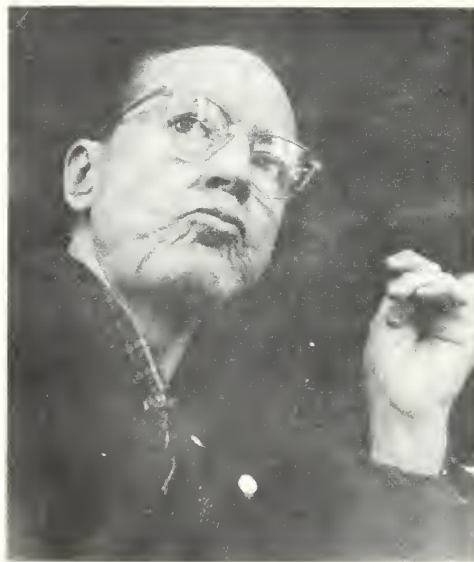
Molly Malone Cook began taking photographs in the '50s while living in Europe. After working in New York City as one of the first photographers for the newly founded *Village Voice*, she moved to Provincetown where she established one of the first photography galleries in the East, VII Photographers Gallery, offering work by Steichen, McKenna, Smith, Minor White, and others. It was during these years, the extraordinary '60s, that the photographs in this issue of *Provincetown Arts* were taken. Central to all Cook's work, and apparent here, is the photographer's interest in capturing the essence, the whimsy, the serious regard with which the human countenance meets, or shies away from, the eye of the camera. Continuing to live in Provincetown, Molly Malone Cook began the MMC Literary Agency in 1977, working primarily with writers of fiction and memoirs.



MOLLY MALONE COOK AND WALTER P. CHRYSLER, JR.



MARY OLIVER



MYRON STOUT



ARTHUR COHEN



WALKER EVANS



MISCHA RICHTER



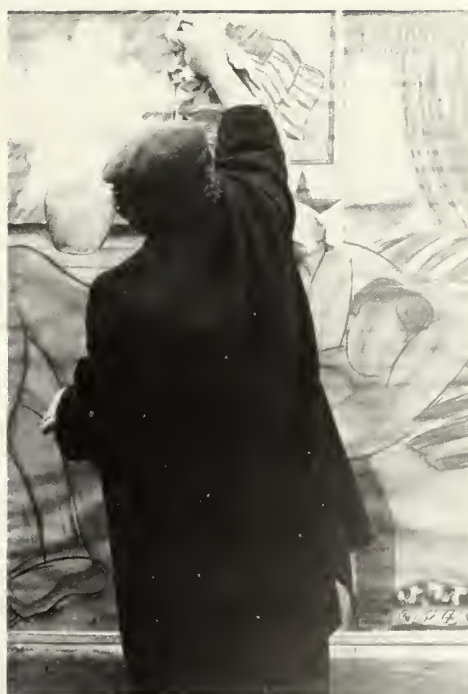
ROBERT MOTHERWELL



CATHARINE HUNTINGTON



NORMAN MAILER



REGGIE CABRAL



HUDSON AND IONE WALKER



ALVIN ROSS

MASTHEAD RESORT

COTTAGES • APARTMENTS • ROOMS

Same owner/management since 1959

Top-rated for 30 years

AAA

450 feet of private beach

Sun deck on the water • Landscaped grounds

New luxurious kitchens & baths

Mooring & launch service available
for visiting yachtsmen.



OPEN YEAR ROUND

AARP & Senior Discounts

P. O. Box 577 • 31-41 Commercial Street, Provincetown, Mass. 02657-0577

Tel: (508) 487-0523 or 1-800-395-5095 • Fax: (508) 487-9251





JOHN HULTBERG, PROVINCETOWN, 1958

Crying at the Lock: *the Journals of John Hultberg*

SELECTION BY CHRISTOPHER BUSA

John Hultberg's distinguished career spans four decades and nearly 200 exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad. Born in 1922 in Berkeley, CA, of Swedish parents, he attended Fresno State College where he earned a degree in literature. After serving as lieutenant with the Navy in the Pacific, he entered the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco, where he studied painting with Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, and Richard Diebenkorn. He moved to New York in 1948, enrolling at the Art Students League with Morris Kantor and Will Barnet. He absorbed the urban landscape, worked as a guard at the Metropolitan Museum, and associated with Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, and Robert Rauschenberg—all influences in the development of his signature style, which he calls Hultbergian, but which others have called, variously, apocalyptic, surreal, sci-fi, melodramatic, visionary, or romantic. In 1954 Hultberg moved to Paris where he was to join other expatriate American artists, including Lawrence Calcagno, Joan Mitchell, Norman Bluhm, Paul Jenkins, and Sam Francis. He traveled and exhibited in Europe and met Martha Jackson, who invited him to join her new gallery in New York, beginning a long and successful association. Hultberg also began keeping a journal, continuing for almost 30 years and creating a vivid portrait of the art world from the inside looking out. This summer Hultberg has a mini-retrospective at the Staller Center for the Arts at Stony Brook, State University of New York, and an exhibition of prints and graphics at the Portland Museum in Maine.

1955

Martha tells me, "Paint small, and use light paint, nobody wants those dark things of yours," then the next day says "Get all your big dark paintings together, that's what Michel Tapie wants to show of yours."

Martha reprimands me for letting my children call me by my first name. But I am not a daddy and will not pretend. M. probably dis-

likes this bohemian permissiveness as much as I dislike the middle-class pompousness she still respects in spite of her break from it with her art career. But she, like so many others, sees only the tip of the Hultberg.

At Riker's someone had pointed across Eighth Street, telling us that Alger Hiss lived there. I said, "Is he a painter?" with Bill Sebring adding, to laughs, "No, John, it would be better to say 'What gallery is he with!'" Someone else said the rules of being a liberal were very simple: the bigots are allowed to kill us but we cannot kill them. Kermit Lansner, the book critic of *Newsweek* said he objected to Norman Mailer's calling Eisenhower "an old woman." After all, the office of President deserved automatic respect. A middle-aged woman piped up, asking why being called an old woman should be an insult.

I tried to buy a *New York Times* this morning but there were none left. "Thought it was the *Daily News* that was on strike," I told the kiosk vendor. "Aw," he growled, "when they can't get the *News* they'll read anything!"

Leonardo advised artists to find recognizable shapes in accidental wall-stains, etc. This is often quoted by abstract expressionists as a *raison d'être* for their painting, but they avoid all recognizable connotations in these stains. I want to explore this neglected searching for semi-recognizable forms in the accidents of these stains.

This pain seems so tangible to me it's almost a three-dimensional object. I have yet to sculpt this great thing.

1956

When the avant-garde agrees, the artists die. When they disagree, they live.

Windows from the inside and outside; looking in, I see tangled objects which must be deciphered, with a lonely figure. (We painters are voyeurs.) Looking out from that window is just as bad, just as dark: a desolation of irrational rubbish stretching to the horizon and even be-

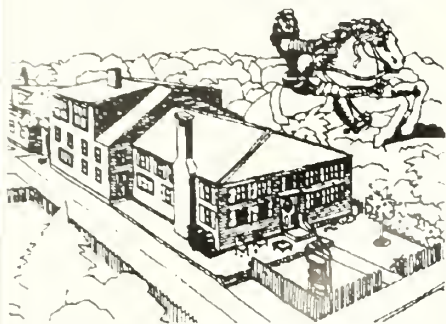
yond, into the sky. Sometimes from this fascinating-boring junk-heap one sees disembodied eyes returning one's unhappy gaze. I have never forgotten this image, which changed my painting for better or worse, have held onto it in moments of doubt until its unbearable unhappiness became as cathartic as a Bartok string quartet.

1958

I went to Provincetown for the first time in May or June with Steve Joye, the director of the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York, to open a branch of that gallery in a room near the entrance of the movie theater near Town Hall. My paintings were shown, as well as work of some of the gallery artists, Karel Appel, William Scott, Antoni Tàpies, Sam Francis, Paul Jenkins, Norman Carton, Louise Nevelson, Joan Mitchell, Grace Hartigan, John von Wicht, Barbara Hepworth, Germain Richier, Claire Falkenstein, Frank Lobdell, Bob Thompson, etc, in group shows. Other galleries in town that summer were Tirca Karlis, the HCE, and the Sun Gallery, a small store painted red, orange, and yellow that showed the work of Red Grooms, Marcia Marcus, and Jay Milder, light-hearted humorous things I liked. A little magazine was started called *Provincetown Review*, its editors Bill Ward, Danny Banko, John and Joyce Elbert, its mentor Norman Mailer. I contributed six drawings to one issue, as did Henry Hensche, Tony Vevers, and other artists of the town. I lived in a tiny house on Bradford Street, where I installed a sleeping loft and used an easel made from a screendoor frame. The younger artists, John Grillo, Jean Cohen, Mary Frank, Mario Garcia, Bill Barrell, Gandy Brody, Norman Cantor, Sidney Gordin, Stephen Pace, Dody Muller, Al Leslie, Michael Goldberg, Budd Hopkins, Marcia Marcus, were very companionable and often in each other's company. Martha Jackson arrived later in the summer along

White Horse Inn

ROOMS & STUDIO APARTMENTS



The White Horse Inn is a 150 year old Captain's House in the quiet East End, directly across from the beach, and just a 10 minute walk to Town center. Studio apartments and comfortable rooms, all individually decorated with original works of art and antiques. There's also a garden and bicycle parking.

INNKEEPER: Frank D. Schaefer

500 Commercial Street

Provincetown, MA 02657

(508) 487-1790

OPEN ALL YEAR • OFF-SEASON RATES

Watermark Inn

Located in Provincetown's quiet

east end, we have created the ultimate

vacation place. Outside, the Watermark

inn retains the charm of traditional

New England architecture, but on the

inside you'll find ten magnificent

contemporary styled suites.

Watermark inn is right on the beach,

with more than 80 feet of private deck

for lounging or sunning.

603 Commercial Street

Provincetown,

Massachusetts 02657

For Reservations:

Please write

or call 487-0165



with the French art critic and gallery advisor Michel Tapié de Celeyran, of the Toulouse-Lautrec family, spreading the word of his ridiculed Art Autre movement and giving a lecture in the large Town Hall, his slides projected by the *Baltimore Sun* art critic Kenneth Sawyer. A cheerful and active summer. I produced quite a lot of work, exhibiting and selling some of it. But I felt Martha's makeshift gallery was not a fashionable success among the cognoscenti of that brash time when abstract expressionism was about to be replaced by the jokes of pop art.

Fritz Bultman, who lives in the house on the hill above my little studio and living shack on Bradford Street (he got me the place), has organized a group to talk about art and literature in his place: Stanley Kunitz, Jack Tworokov, Irving Sandler, Tony Vevers, and myself. Tony arrived belligerent, scoffing when Sandler, after hearing Kunitz use the word "engage," asked what it meant. Tony denounced the whole "seminar" as precious and a waste of time. Since then our little club has not met.

One of my famous weeping dreams surfaced last night, so consoling, those healing tears that flow on and on, wetting my dry soul.

1960

During my project to walk the coast of Manhattan on its very edge I saw several 10-year-old boys pulling themselves out of the East River after swimming from Brooklyn. As I passed Harlem I saw several black boys hurling themselves from the East River Drive's median to the sidewalk through the dense speeding car stream, egged on by companions.

We who wanted to humiliate death by ignoring its obscene cat-calls, now are forced to call it sacred because of our impending martyrdoms.

Nobody can reach Bill de Kooning in his Tenth Street studio since he disconnected his phone. Martha sends him telegrams, wanting to buy some paintings from him, but everything has to be done through Elaine, his wife and business manager. Someone said that after holing up like this-for weeks he bursts out like an uncaged beast to find drink and women.

When they call me an alcoholic don't they mean that I cannot hold with decorum the large amount of liquor I consume as well as the small amount they drink, these social drinkers who would be miserable if deprived of their two glasses a night?

1966

Asked how he liked kindergarten, my son said it didn't leave him enough time in the mornings to think.

1968

Now at the age of 46 I discover I have had 46 one-man shows in the last 25 years. Facts like this used to intoxicate me. Now I feel nothing.

My three-year-old son asked me when I seemed upset about something: "Why don't you cry? That's what I do." Another time he asked me, "If God is good, why did He invent volcanoes?"

Thomas Hardy remains my favorite poet. A hard-earned, intense shorthand, bitter in the mouth, sweet in the belly. If I could paint with these monochromes, these distillations!

1969

Twelve days without drinking.

The great elm tree next to our house is slowly dying: it is too near the swamp and its roots are too wet. No one should put it out of its misery. It must die its own death.

Birds crash against the house constantly. They are exhausted and confused from migrating north. A hummingbird tries to get into a closed window.

1970

I tell myself though the millions of brain cells I killed are irreplaceable, yet the strenuous thinking I am forcing upon myself in my sobriety will stimulate billions of others still in reserve.

1972

Dream: I am having a one-man show in a bad gallery in Manhattan, above a newspaper office. Very few people are at my opening, except Sy B., my ex-close friend. I complain to him that S. Pace, another ex-friend, is not there, and remark that all my friends have left me now that Martha is dead. I have a bottle of whiskey that I offer to my few guests but nobody wants it except myself and the newspaper staff, who are not interested in art. After the opening I depart alone with my almost-empty bottle, full of self-pity. I have \$6.50 in my pocket. I start walking from California, into the country, and notice a street named after a painter I know.

My real enemies are those friends who call me "too intense."

I've cut down on the wine drastically. I shake and cannot paint. Idea to make this journal more readable: emphasize the alcoholic battle. Confessions of a Lush. But it won't succeed unless I'm redeemed. There could be a happy ending.

1973

Today I took that beautiful little lost wax bronze that Mary Frank had made of a nude woman with a lion's head and long hair reclining on her stomach that I had bought from her for \$250 in Provincetown in 1958—I took it to Virginia Zabriski's at her gallery to sell it. Virginia was busy with a client and was obviously annoyed that I was there, looking so scrungy and so thirsty, and offered me \$100, which I took.

About hard-edge painting: I would rather have a hard center and soft edges.

1974

I want alcohol to assume the burden of only about half my past sins.

1975

A born printmaker will turn around and look at the prints his shoes make on a sidewalk after walking through a puddle.

1976

The horn-honker who drowns your Mozart on the radio is himself listening to the same station on his car radio. The supercriminal who keeps raising your food prices is the patron who keeps you alive as an artist.

When I kill time I always torture it a little first!

1977

Alcohol distills into a poignant art form the basic human paradox that one is often punished for what one enjoys intensely.

1978

Impossible for me when I'm outside the alcoholic consciousness to remember the plangent poignancies of a drunk's tendernesses and passions, just as it was impossible for me when drinking to conceive of the bracing pleasures of total sobriety.

I won't be unified in a productive sobriety until I learn to admit that alcohol at one time was indeed a friend to me, helping to give me bravery as a struggling artist. Once addicted to this courage, how could I understand what true fortitude was? To curse what held me together in my cowardice is to lack the awareness of what made me a coward in the first place.

My rare moments of euphoric carelessness seem to be triggered by a kind of synesthesia—a mixing up of one sense with another, as when a meaningless decoration I am staring at becomes sacred because I am listening to exalted music.

The alcoholic artist works in a tradition of alcoholic artists of the past. That is the way they altered their senses. There was a respectable legal tradition of booze. The fact that some artists were not involved in this does not interest the drunk.

The courage to mention rope in the hanged man's widow's house is the essence of AA therapy.

1979

Kicking the drink is the only bravery I've ever shown in my whole life.

Paint used against itself can spawn masterpieces.

1980

My outrage when I see sex being used as a weapon has nothing to do with my respect for

this unsettling and ever comforting state of war. Sexual gluttony charms us all in one way or another. Equanimity and tolerance have no life at all in the furnace of sexual rights and demands. Anyone in the grip of a total obsession is noble.

The thing that finally made me give up alcohol was a realization that I was losing my esthetic judgment skills.

In 1957 I showed R. Rauschenberg some of my photo collages that were in Martha Jackson's painting rack. Only after this did he do his own photograph assemblages. In Rudi Blesh's book *Collage* my photomontage is dated 1952. When people see these things of mine they usually murmur "Rauschenberg." So many of my half-aborted ideas turn up in other artists' work, even though I disdain the mass fad Zeitgeist they suckle at.

Once painters have established the abstract inevitability of an unforgettable design in a picture then they can go to almost any length to add verisimilitude from the observed world without breaking the mood of the thing-in-itself that any work of art must be.

Only hicks are interested in the avant-garde at this time.

To be a true painter is always to inhabit a paradise that may have its bad moments but which is always there, ready to absorb any amount of hellishness.

Don't know your enemy too well or you may be converted to his cause.

New York Jewish male painters and sculptors have a certain drunken competence I envy.

Painters who can't judge a book by its covers don't get very far.

"God probably looks like an oblong blur." I believe I read this somewhere in Aldous Huxley. When I quoted this to Mark Rothko, he was astounded.

1981

Because you praise pansexuality's raptures you are called homosexual by those holding with difficulty onto heterosexuality.

1982

August 24, Monhegan Island, Maine. Collect *New Yorkers* and book reviews; paint fireplace; repair kitchen ceiling; write out second violin fantasy for Toby Mostel; throw out old medications; take plastics to dock to dump; paint stairs and kitchen; whitewash basement and hatchway; stamp my name in all books; clean out ashes's chute; give Jeff Dolan a painting of mine, and play and book to Xerox; roll up and wire old *New York Times* after clipping photos for collages; title, sign, and roll recent paintings done this summer; sign all painted boards and pack; put new fireback in fireplace; cut the fallen tree on trail 12; put all books and papers in boxes; take batteries out of large radio pack; take gesso tubs to Richard Farrell next door for winter storage; wash all brushes, pack them with paint to go. ■

RUTH GILBERT
REAL ESTATE
487-2004
REALTOR

R Open Daily 9-4
Sundays by appointment

RESIDENTIAL SALES
COMMERCIAL SALES
VACATION RENTALS

167 COMMERCIAL STREET
POST OFFICE BOX 553
PROVINCETOWN, MA 02657

OFFICE: (508) 487-2004
FAX: (508) 487-9478

Mary Ann Cabral - Salesperson

SNOW
&
SNOW

Attorneys at Law

•
Christopher J. Snow
Ronald E. Friesse
•

90 Harry Kemp Way
Provincetown, MA 02657
(508) 487-1160
FAX: 487-2694



THE CLAM TWINS, TABBOO! AND MARK MORRISROE, WITH LYNELLE, NEW YORK, 1981, PHOTO DAVID HENRY

Mark Morrisroe: *Beautiful and Bad*

BY KATHE IZZO

YEARS AGO I READ AN INTERVIEW WITH A FAMOUS DESIGNER, I THINK IT WAS KARL LAGERFELD, IN WHICH HE DESCRIBED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN BEAUTY. HE SAID IN EUROPE THE MOTHERS TELL THEIR DAUGHTERS AND SONS THEY ARE BEAUTIFUL ALL THE TIME, FROM THE DAY THEY ARE BORN, THAT FOR EUROPEANS, BEAUTY IS THEIR BIRTHRIGHT. HE SAID THIS RARELY HAPPENS IN THE UNITED STATES.

—KATHE IZZO

Mark Morrisroe, a.k.a. Mark Dirt, became my friend in the winter of 1980, the winter he fell in love with Jonathan (Jack Pierson). I introduced them in this weird pink candy box of a restaurant, C'est Si Bon, that Mark and I worked in, along with some other freakish lovelies. The fancy upstairs dining room had a grand picture window facing Arlington Street on the Public Garden framed with excessive drapery more properly suiting a whorehouse in Pigalle. That's where the stars liked to sit when they were in town. That's where we liked to sit when we could, after lunch and before dinner or late at night, stealing champagne and expensive wine, smoking cigarette after cigarette, talking about sex.

I had seen Mark limping around in the clubs for years but friendship never seemed a possibility. Although I liked to think of myself as a bad girl—my libido and unquenchable thirst for all sorts of criminal behavior running amok with my high-strung nervous system—I was basically a suburban mall rat raised to be an over-achiever

and I knew it. I felt the truly bad were beyond my reach, and that included the legend of Mark Dirt, trick turning since he was, what a preteen? With a bullet in his back—bad, bad, bad, bad. It was at C'est Si Bon, that I saw the real Mark—career man. Yeah, he was bad, so bad he convinced owner John Aument to let him design the street-level window of the restaurant, yes, Mark's arty, punky photographs around the corner from the Ritz-Carlton (remember this was 1980). Through our ruthless ambition, we were blood siblings. It was as if we were groomed together in that French kitchen, preening ourselves in that big window, like race horses cultivated for fierce competition. We wanted to be extra cosmopolitan, beautiful, and really smart and we wanted everyone to want us. I couldn't decide if I was into girls or boys but Mark was a boy's boy. That's how Jonathan came into the picture.

AFTER HE DIED I READ ONE OF HIS NOTEBOOKS: HE DESCRIBES ME AS A CORNFED REDHEAD FRESH OFF THE FARM, WHOSE ONLY AMBITION WAS TO BE CONSIDERED COOL. I WAS ALL OVER THE PLACE AND NO PLACE AND RIPE FOR THE PICKING. THOUGH IT MADE ME ANGRY TO THINK HE KNEW IT.

—JACK PIERSON

Jonathan also wanted to be extra cosmopolitan. He and Stephen (Tasjian -- a.k.a. Tabboo!) had already found each other and had their own gang going by the time I met them, with Sand Shoppell and John Stefanelli and some other kids. We were all at MassArt together, in the Studio for Interrelated Media, which usually meant that you were bright but difficult and had probably been thrown out of at least one other depart-

ment for not sticking with the program. We pretty much did whatever we felt like, which, for Jonathan and I, usually was conceptual performances that had to do with gauzy spiderweb fabrics and lots of candles, soft porn of an undefined sexuality, Jonathan's arty photographs and graphics, my long, homily-like poems, and refreshments. Stephen worked with us and by himself, wearing dresses, using puppets, and painting big collages.

They were both odd and charismatic. I think Stephen was "seeing" this curious, quiet boy, Paul Fitzgerald, but at that time, who would know? Both of them were pretty shy about their sexual inclinations and I was so busy with mine it didn't really matter what was going on; I just wanted to devour them and their creativity. Jonathan had this sexy black turtleneck, Andy-Warhol-kind-of style that I loved but it was Stephen I tried to seduce over a candlelit dinner (several times I think). He didn't go for it, thank god—that would have really been a mess. We continued to collaborate. Jonathan and Stephen would come by work and Mark would watch them through the dishwashers' window. He asked me about Jonathan and that was about it. Neither took any convincing and they were hardly ever apart after that. Jack says it was December but I think it was late March.

MONA AND I DECIDED TO HITCHHIKE TO PROVINCETOWN IN 1966, BECAUSE WE HAD HEARD IT WAS A "WEIRD PLACE."

—JOHN WATERS, *SHOCK VALUE*

I had seen *Pink Flamingos* at some all-night camp movie fest in Cambridge, so I was relatively cool, but Mark was the first person I knew who knew—no, worshipped—the *oeuvre* of John

Waters, the perverse underground film king of the glamorous and ugly. Mark had been to Provincetown off and on for a few summers and had seen the Waters entourage in person, in addition to all the other P-town spectacles. Mark had Jonathan tight under his spell. Provincetown/summer of '81 was the appropriate career move for them. Stephen took some convincing. His recent graduation from MassArt emancipated him from his free-rent status with his parents, throwing him into a state of new-found adult responsibilities and panic. Mark always had money somehow, living off his S.S.I. disability checks and there were those visits to NY, to collect cash from his "john," that we all heard about but none of us knew. He worked a little but didn't need much. Stephen had filled in for Mark a couple of times dishwashing at C'est Si Bon, but had never worked a real job before. He wanted to be an artist. He couldn't quite digest the concept of a summer's rent in Provincetown or the possibility (and eventual reality) of working many jobs to make it.

PART OF [OUR] APARTMENT WAS MADE OUT OF A SUBMARINE, AND TREES GREW RIGHT UP THROUGH THE LIVING ROOM. THERE WAS NO RUNNING WATER, BUT IT WAS AN INCREDIBLY BEAUTIFUL PLACE. THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS WHEN IT RAINED, IT WAS LIKE BEING OUTSIDE. THERE WAS NO RENT. YOU JUST HAD TO BE LIKED BY THE INCREDIBLY ECCENTRIC LANDLORD, PRESCOTT TOWNSEND, A NOTORIOUS 70-YEAR-OLD GAY LIBERATIONIST WHO DROVE AROUND ON A MOTOR SCOOTER AND ATE NOTHING BUT HOTDOGS.

—JOHN WATERS, *SHOCK VALUE*

Across the street from the post office in Provincetown, behind 212 Commercial Street, is a small parking lot. At the far side of the lot are some hidden stairs heading up into the trees and to the apartment Jonathan, Mark, and Stephen rented that summer. There is a no-trespassing sign there now, and at one point, when I checked, there was a condemned sign. It is an incongruous address—a tree house in the center of town—and for years I questioned the accuracy of my memory. I have never known anyone else who lived there, and if you've lived in Provincetown for awhile, you know that's kind of peculiar. The apartment always seemed tiny and dark when I visited them there that summer, deep in the trees, ideal for sleeping late.

THAT WAS THE WEIRD OR INTERESTING THING THE THREE OF US, KIND OF, YOU KNOW, NOT CONSCIOUSLY THEN BUT NOW THAT I LOOK BACK, ONE OF THE THINGS WE DID WAS IMMEDIATELY GO INTO OLD, QUEENIE, FAGGY BEHAVIOR. WE WERE LIKE 20 BUT WE WANTED TO KNOW HOW TO CHA CHA CHA.

—JACK PIERSON

Provincetown was to be the boys' debutante ball. They entered the town fresh and green and overdressed. Stephen waltzed the streets in his New Romantic garb, sweating in black jodhpurs and flouncy, ruffled pirate shirts, while Jonathan amassed an infinite collection of paisley shirts and madras Bermuda shorts. Mark remained spare and primal in his beat uniform of starched shirts and pleated pants. Beach attire was not part of their repertoire. They weren't really ready for Jason Byron Gavann. Jason had no time for conscious apparitions, he just was, hot and girly and working Commercial Street for all she was worth. A working artist, his photographs hung in the spooky mansion of Provincetown art czar, Reggie Cabral. His long blond hair was cut short and punky that summer, his shapely legs stunning in his indecent cutoffs and Converse hightops. There had been some kind of introduction at Spit, the rock disco on Landsdowne Street in Boston and Jason was on the boys' agenda that summer: a classic flamboyant queer, kept boy, artist, queen.

I THOUGHT IT WAS HUGE. WE WERE BEING HANDED GAY INFORMATION FROM ANOTHER GENERATION.

—JACK PIERSON

Flamboyance rises like a soufflé and is just that sensitive; the slightest puff of insecurity and you are simply annoying. The boys were smart enough to know that and bright enough to observe, pick up a few tips, plan their moves slowly. They invited Jason up to the tree house one night for evening cocktails and tried to work up some swish for their guest, but let's face it, there wasn't enough swish in the three of them to keep up with the little pinky fingernail of Miss Gavann, who remembers them as awkward, gangly teenage boys, smartypants. They didn't teach you how to be a real girl in art school and they certainly didn't teach you how to work it like you believed it. They didn't teach you how to Cha Cha Cha. The exchange that night was hesitant at best, until someone put on some bossa nova and Jason got twitchy. He grabbed Mark, totally blind to his dragging leg and had him bumping around the tiny room. It was an ecstatic twirl, a free ride, just one blinding effeminate moment for three real boys.

I JUST NEVER LIKED [DRAG] BECAUSE I JUST NEVER THINK I LOOK PRETTY.

—JACK PIERSON

Stephen was dragging in performance art class at school or so it seemed. There were dresses involved, I remember that, but it was definitely a boy in a dress and the word pretty wasn't really involved except in the purely conceptual sense, like, you know, "I feel pretty." He was the disciplined one; his aspirations, queer and kitschy, got Mark worked up that summer. Stephen made P-town his first *studio*; after all, he had just graduated—it was time to make it! He would work all night on his painting and collages, usually after working a double or triple

shift. He got Mark rattling on "sound projects," sampling from yard sale records and banging tin cans, recording back and forth between two tape recorders. Stephen was big, loud, naive, and completely unabashed. His day-glo collages filled the house and he pushed the boys out of the trees and into the world. It is rumored that Mark thought Stephen a genius.

I HAD NO ACCESS TO WIGS. I DIDN'T KNOW WIGS. I HADN'T EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT WIGS.

—TABBOO!

The first Clam Twin gigs were weird guy drag—loungey, greasy affairs originally by Mark and Jonathan (for a second). The true Twins will always be Mark and Stephen—slick and silly, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis together like one soul in two filthy raincoats, hair sleazed back and Mark with a pencil-thin, pencilled-in moustache. They did the street thing, in front of Town Hall, wherever.

REMEMBER—THIS WAS BEFORE CD'S, THERE WAS NO MTV, NO RUPAUL, NOT EVEN LAURIE ANDERSON WAS OUT THERE YET. REGULAR AMERICANS HAD NEVER HEARD OF PERFORMANCE ART.

—TABBOO!

An undisclosed townie source tells me, "I knew there was something going on there but I don't think I was smart enough to get it." The stage gigs didn't go so well. They were booed off at least once at the open mike at the Crown and there was the rumor of some wild birthday party at Spiritus. They were working with what they had and what they could find. You have to remember, this was their first exposure to real drag, professional Cher drag. It wasn't until the accidental find of a box of cheap old lady wigs amongst the fish hooks in the amorphous army-navy grab bag at Marine Specialties, that wigs and eye makeup became essential. Mark became stranger in a wig and Tabboo! began to grow and glow. Their repertoire waxed exponentially, although there was a special glue to Judy Garland for Stephen and Dusty Springfield for Mark. They could hardly wait to get out and perform; they could barely get their stockings on.

[MARK] HAD SEEN ME IN DRAG AND HE THOUGHT I WAS ABSOLUTELY BEAUTIFUL, BUT IT SURPRISED ME WHEN I FINALLY DID SEE HIM IN DRAG THAT HE WAS SO UGLY. HE WAS SUCH A FUCKING MESS. I USED TO THINK TO MYSELF, DOES HE THINK HE'S BEAUTIFUL, DOES HE CARE OR IS IT JUST THE IDEA OF THESE CLOTHES BEING A VEHICLE FOR HIM TO FEEL COMFORTABLE TO DROP A WRIST OR TO HAVE A LIMP SHOULDER, OR TO SWISH HIS ASS AROUND?

—JASON BYRON GAVANN

The film *The Laziest Girl in Town* begins with Mark lying in his bed, as Shelley, the laziest girl in town. Enter Stephen, lurchingly psychedelic and perverse in tilted wig, florid dress and 5 o'clock shadow, as Popcorn, her best girlfriend. The acting is bad but finally they're the girls of their dreams, or something. They repeat take after take just so we don't miss anything. Mark tyrannizes Jonathan behind the camera and pushes Stephen right over the edge when he orders Popcorn to fuck herself with an ear of corn that she has already removed all the kernels from by giving it a blow job. "Who needs a man when you can have old vegetables?" they slurp to each other, their wigs sliding down over their noses. They pull their pants down for us, tuck their cocks between their legs, rub their "pussies," giggle, and chant "I'm glad I'm a man."

"ARE YOU SOME KIND OF TRANSEXUAL?"

"A TRANSEXUAL WANTS TO BE A WOMAN PHYSICALLY. A TRANSVESTITE JUST WANTS TO WEAR WOMEN'S CLOTHING AND THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO DO."

—THE LAZIEST GIRL IN TOWN

Jonathan had a brief role in the shorter, earlier film *Hello from Bertha*, as an eerie, faggy señorita with smeared lipstick, a mantilla over his boy haircut, and a rose behind his ear. He moved like a poignant and heavy-lidded somnambulist. At the end of *Laziest Girl*, he's back on the screen, handing over the camera to David Armstrong, as the muddy and shy babyface come red-neck straight boy ready to fix both Mark/Shelley and her appliances, if he can only get his lines straight. Mark/Shelley, dressed in sprayed-on Capri pants and a skimpy shirt tied up under her tits, schizophrenically flips between fierce dominatrix—ordering Jonathan to perfect his (sort of) scary trigger lip and repeat his queer-hating gig over and over again—and vulnerable, trembling sexpot. It's a drag rape, a rape in drag. The rapist/camera goes berserk and jumps the sexpot, crumples her to the floor, ripping off her tits and wig, leaving her in a puddle. We see her the next moment, a crying mess, tawdry and unloved, in her bed for weeks, being giddily consoled by girlfriend Popcorn. Mark holds himself, comforts himself, with a sweet hand, a surprising soft touch.

THE SWEETEST GIRL THAT I EVER KISSED WAS MARRIED TO ANOTHER MAN—MY MOTHER.

—MARK DIRT

We're never really sure when it comes to compulsive liars, like Mark, if they truly believe themselves, if they are truly lying, if the world in which they grew up was so twisted and unpredictable they live it like they saw it. Mark's drag face was real, and as far as any of us can tell, it is the way he remembers his mom, his mouth beyond distortion, full of undying love and spit. He stuck to that face, Sweet Raspberry,

every self-portrait in drag an embarrassed yet reverent, sober tribute. He looks like someone we all might know, like my own Aunt Marie in drag: a smoker, a hacker, a woman who knows she's on her own from here, who knows she can't call back her youth and beauty, who, most probably, never had either. This is the movie of Mark's conception: his mother, sleeping it off on a stained davenport, fucked by Albert De Salvo, the Boston Strangler, and left to die, the little seed of Mark Dirt growing in her saggy belly, inside her torn stretch-pants.

THE OTHER MAIN THING ABOUT THAT SUMMER IS THAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT JOHN WATERS TO MARK. WE DIDN'T HANG OUT; IT WAS TOTALLY JUST FANS. WE GAVE HIM A CLAM TWINS ASHTRAY (AT THE POLYESTER PREMIERE) THAT WE HAD MADE OUT OF A SHELL. I LOOKED FOR IT WHEN I WENT TO HIS HOUSE, I LOOKED ALL OVER THE PLACE, BUT I'M SURE HE JUST LEFT IT THERE IN PROVINCETOWN.

—JACK PIERSON

Polyester was John Water's first mainstream hit. At least I think so; I saw it at a suburban strip mall theater on a weekend trip to visit my parents. The P-town premiere was marked with an excessive queer parade and all the big Baltimore stars were there: Divine, Cookie Mueller, Edith Massey, Mink Stole, and the director himself. It was perfect—Provincetown as homo-Hollywood, a national sensation right up close and personal for the boys' viewing pleasure. They stood in line, like everybody else, and dutifully scratched their smell-o-vision cards, the freakiest advertising gimmick to come along in our short lifetimes—cards supplied to every ticket holder, with five or six revolting smells to be scratched at the appropriate moment, commanded from the screen. And that wasn't the only smell that provoked our boys. There was another provocative perfume—big-time success and power!

I CAME TO PROVINCETOWN TO DRY OUT, WHICH MEANT I DIDN'T DO DRUGS, JUST TOTAL DRINKING. BECAUSE OF MY STATE OF MIND I WAS REALLY KIND OF DOWNTRODDEN. THEY THOUGHT I WAS THIS BIG CELEBRITY. THEY WERE FUNNY AND INTRIGUING, REALLY FRESH. THEY WOULD TALK ABOUT THEMSELVES AS IF THEY WERE DRINKING A LOT BUT COMPARED TO ME THEY WEREN'T DRINKING ANYTHING. I WOULD GO INTO THE LIQUOR STORE TO BUY A PINT OF BOURBON AND JUST WALK ON DOWN THE STREET AND START DRINKING IT UNTIL IT WAS GONE. [JONATHAN] SAID HE WAS JUST STUNNED.

—DAVID ARMSTRONG

David Armstrong was a beauty, one of those genuine androgynes: a tall and lanky smooth-

faced boy with a girlish smile. Wearing a dress thrown casually over a pair of jeans and no makeup, just out of bed, he turned all sorts of heads in his younger days on Beacon Hill. David had moved on to New York with his constant companion, Nan Goldin, and they were living in a loft on the Bowery, a crowded loft with an intense late night schedule. There was a lot of art being produced and being noticed—Nan had already been picked up by Leo Castelli—and a lot of drugs being taken. David and Nan had already marked Provincetown with their presence in the mid-'70s. Both Nan and David rode their lives as fast and best they could and kept a photographic diary, together and apart, that has become legendary. Nan knew Mark and had begun some kind of cryptic art flirtation with him in the halls of the Museum School. But it was through Paul Johnson, regular on the Meet (Meat) Rack in front of Town Hall, that David tangled himself in the knotty web of Mark Morrisroe.

HE WAS SOME EX-BOYFRIEND OF MARK'S. HE WAS A CLAMMER. HE HAD ONE OF THOSE BUTCH METAL TABLES IN HIS KITCHEN. HE HAD A TATTOO ON HIS HAND THAT SAID "EDDIE" AND WAS OBVIOUSLY DONE IN 1953. IT SEEMED VERY WILD TO US THAT YOU COULD BE GAY AND A CLAMMER.

—JACK PIERSON

There was no phone in the tree house and that was a problem for a boy with as much going on as Mark. Paul Johnson had a phone and let Mark use it whenever he needed to. Paul was one of the many peculiar father/boyfriend/john figures in Mark's life. Unassuming, and at least 10 years older than the boys, Paul lived at 102 Bradford in a dilapidated house, owned by an elderly Portuguese woman, that looked right out of the 1930s. He lived a regular life: working hard, getting to bed early, driving a pickup truck, and knowing, seemingly, everybody. He was queer and a townie, one of the more exotic species for the boys. Meeting in a Central Square commune in Cambridge when David was just 15, Paul and David became fast buddies. They lived together that summer. Paul always had this paternal thing for Mark. No one really knows the details, but he watched out for him, was good to him. Over the years he drifted away from town. He died from AIDS a few years ago.

YOU COULD GIVE THE DESK CLERK AT THE MILNER \$7 AND THEY WOULD LET YOU TAKE TRICKS UPSTAIRS. MARK SAID HE TOOK TRICKS TO THE MILNER. I NEVER SAW HIM AT THE MILNER. I NEVER SAW HIM AT GREYHOUND. HE NEVER HUNG IN PARK SQUARE. HE NEVER WENT OUT WITH US TO DINNER. HE NEVER TURNED A LATE NIGHT DATE. THEY ALL WANTED TO BE ON THE STREET WITH US. WE WERE ON THE STREET BECAUSE WE HAD NO MONEY. THEY WERE ALL

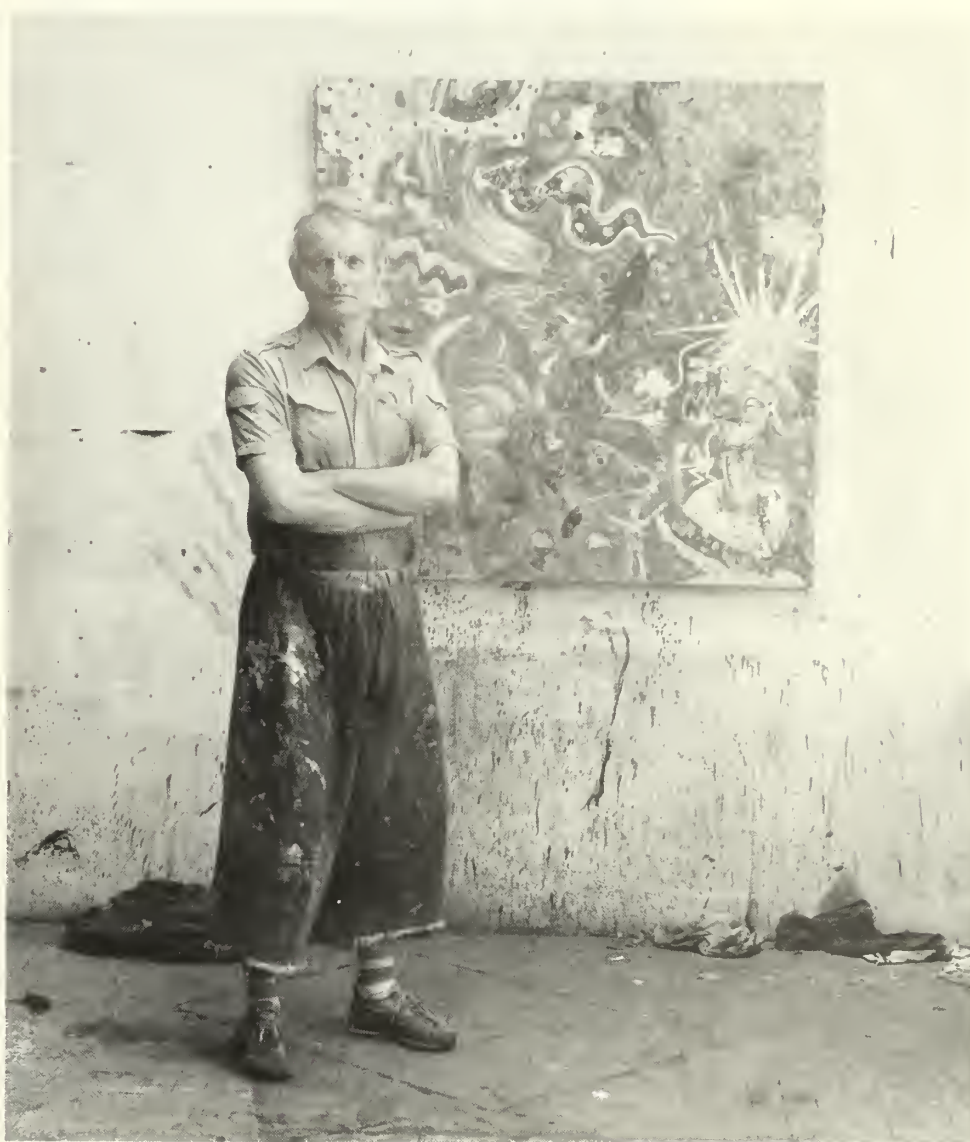
IRONED AND STARCHED. THEY HAD NICE CLOTHES. THEY HAD AN APARTMENT.

—JASON BYRON GAVANN

LOST FRIENDS

Robert Beauchamp: *An Homage*

BY LAWRENCE SHAINBERG



ROBERT BEAUCHAMP, 1988, PHOTO BY PETER BELLAMY

There are many more stories of what went on that summer. Some versions are the same; a lot of them are conflicting and contradicting, but basically they all add up to a lot of ambition and drive. A life lived between a text of excess and the real turns of a hard life is a tough one to straddle. All I know for sure is what I saw. The boys worked hard, studied hard, and tried to live as hard as they could. Like every other summer in Provincetown, things got slow and scary for out-of-towners after Labor Day hit. I saw Mark and Jonathan when they came back from P-town at a party at 11th Hour Gallery, the loft I lived in with some friends. Mark followed me into my room and shut the door behind himself, turning off the lights and cackling. Immediately the stereo emitted a brutal abortive screech. In his attempt to scare me, Mark had stepped on the turntable and destroyed it. He was so repentant. Mark, the punk, begging my forgiveness. Mark, sweet boy with a bad leg, offering me money to fix things—could this be real? This is the way I remember him best, yet in his next breath he was hurting my feelings, full of snotty disdain for those of us rotting in Boston while he was moving on. A few weeks later, we had an opening at the loft of paintings by Stephen and my boyfriend at the time, Tony Millionaire. The Clam Twins performed, mostly behind a curtain, breaking dishes on the floor. They came out, sang a few songs in real drag, lighting matches to hair spray. They were total brats.

It actually took another couple of years for Mark and Jonathan to move to New York, and by then they weren't even together anymore. Mark was still photographing, Jonathan finding himself. Stephen moved to New York pretty much right away and kept painting and performing, trying some very alternative rock-and-roll and go-go dancing in drag at the Pyramid Club in the East Village, eventually becoming Tabboo!, supervixen drag diva. Jonathan changed his name to Jack in 1987 or sometime around there. He got a studio on 42nd Street and got serious about his work. Mark died of AIDS at the young age of 30 in July of 1989, his work just starting to get serious attention. I was in Provincetown. I met some friends at the Edwige for breakfast. We were somber, recounting fond memories until someone giggled, "He was really evil." And we all giggled too, "Yeah, he was really bad." ■

Kathe Izzo, the founder of the Shadow Writing Project in Provincetown, is a poet and performer.

Bob Beauchamp died, of prostate cancer, in March 1995. He was 70 years old and he'd been my friend for more than 30 years. We met briefly in Greece, when I was 25 and he 37, and then, a few months after I returned to New York, I ran into him at Dillon's Bar, which was the scene of the moment in the art world. I didn't know anything about the art world. My liberal arts education had filled my head with ideas about art but I knew nothing of its reality. Dillon's was populated by artists coming down from work after good or bad days at the studio, lots of egos in various stages of expansion or decomposition. Mostly, for me, Dillon's was Bob Beauchamp, though there was almost never any ego on display with him. Paint on his jeans and under his fingernails, construction boots, trying to break up fistfights, crying into his beer that his work had gone stale, that he'd lost his courage and imagination, he embodied art as vocation that had but distant relation to museums or the academy. "What do I do as a painter?" he

said once, "I get up every day, go to my studio and try to do something better than I did the day before." Once I knew that I could count on finding him at the bar, I took to stopping in at the beginning or the end of an evening, and without quite realizing it, left behind a kind of loneliness I'd come to take as part of the dues one paid for living in New York. By the time Dillon's closed a few years later and the scene had moved uptown to Max's Kansas City, he and I had formed the habit of meeting almost every night at the bar. We also played touch football together on Sunday afternoons, watched boxing and basketball and football on television, went fishing for bluefish on charters out of Montauk, ran together, studied karate together. I don't recall us having serious conversations. Mostly, we conversed looking straight ahead—at the water when we fished, at the TV set, at the mirror behind the bar. Until the last few years, when he

George McNeil, 1908-1995

BY HELEN MCNEIL

My father always seemed to look the same. His white hair was thinned, his eyes a bright, sharp grey-blue, his hands moving with an emphatic energy. In front of a canvas he liked he would recreate the form with his hands: "Now *this* is good art; see how that corner works." If it was bad art, his hand would take a downwards swipe. Even in his 80s, he worked in a kind of expressionist dance, darting up to the canvas, darting back, squinting, sighing, even grunting, then having another go. In the earlier years, at 38 East Ninth Street or in Provincetown, the canvas stood on an easel or was propped against a wall. In Brooklyn, and from the mid-'70s in the Catskills, he worked on large, wheeled, trestle tables or on the floor. The canvases grew larger and more riotous, but never so large that he could not reach into the center with the stiff thick brushes he preferred. From the slow-drying impasto, from the dozens of hand-mixed tins of color, from his clothes covered in paint, came the smell of turpentine and oil: the stink of color.



GEORGE MCNEIL, PHOTO BY JONATHAN SANLOFER

When an artist lives for a long time, and when what success he has occurs in late life, it can be tempting to treat his career backwards. In George's case, his exuberant canvases from the 1980s astonished those narrow reviewers who associated energy only with youth. It seemed then, oddly, as if he had lived his life in order to be congratulated for work that was said to look like that of a 30-year-old, when in fact it takes decades of dedication to achieve such sublime ease in oil paint. "Painting is an old man's art!" George once exclaimed with a certain ironic defiance, as he raised his glass to his old friends Giorgio Cavallon and Esteban Vicente.

But the paintings that George McNeil painted for almost 70 years come out of a story that reads forwards, and that story is the central narrative of the Americanizing of the European modernist painterly traditions. The fit is almost eerily close. From cubism through Hans Hofmann, to abstract expressionism and beyond to his own neo-expressionism, George took a direct and now, it seems, inevitable path. He was the arch-painter. He never made sculpture. Video and performance weren't even on the map as far as he was concerned. His abstract expressionism was about using color as form, trying to make a direct sensate connection through the eye. The color modelling came from Hans Hofmann, and George came to Hofmann from his own Irish Catholic, working-class boyhood in New York through Pratt Institute (where Cézanne was "too modern" to be studied), thence to cubism with Jan Matulka at the Art Students League and a year or so in the Metropolitan Museum copying everything (a practice he later disapproved of). In 1929 he had shared the formative experience

Robert Beauchamp

was sick, I can't remember him calling me on the phone or suggesting a meeting or discovering, say, a ballgame we'd want to see together. With the exception of the bar, most of what we did together was my idea. Since he never read the newspaper, he knew so little of what was going on that he might have been living in Kansas. Not that in Kansas his life would have been much different. Unless interrupted by an invitation from one of his friends, he worked 12 or 13 hours, seven days a week, and for relaxation went to the bar. Though now and then he went to museums or galleries, he seemed immune to urban distraction, keeping his social life to a minimum, treating the telephone like an infectious disease. Christmas, New Year's Day, his birthday or his wife's, he put on his overalls, his backpack, and his boots, and headed off to one of the studios from or to which, when the lease ran out or the rent climbed out of reach, he and I and other friends moved his ever expanding opus over the years. In 1975, we needed two trips with the big Ryder truck we rented; in 1980, three; in 1984, even though he'd removed at least a hundred paintings from their stretchers and rolled them up like carpets, five. Now and then I got fed up with his compulsiveness, the rigidity of his schedule—a dozen no's for every yes when it came to invitations—but the more I struggled with discipline and distraction, not to mention the loneliness and in-

stability of the profession I had taken as my own, the more I realized that it was precisely what exasperated me about Bob that made him such an inspiration. For instruction, I could always turn to writers who'd done it better than I could ever hope to do, but none of them could offer me the example of his work-habit—persistence, endurance, a passion for the process that was sublimely, almost fanatically, indifferent to success or failure. Imagine what it meant to someone who'd studied Arts and Humanities to meet an artist who liked to call himself a Small Businessman.

He was raised in a tenement, the sixth of seven kids in a slum family from Denver. His father left home when Bob was three and his mother supported the family working in a bakery. He was a football star in high school until he started painting and lost interest in the sport, but during all the time I knew him, the picture of him as a "triple-threat" halfback that had appeared in the *Denver Post* was always pinned to his studio wall—right next to the orangutans and tigers, the ballet dancers, the de Koonings and Pollocks and Bacons that were such crucial sources for his work. Until he got sick, five years before his death, Bob continued to look almost preternaturally like the halfback in that photograph, lean and muscular and light on his feet, raw as any kid who'd never left the heartland, angular jaw set firm and confrontationally, one green eye squinting ever-so-slightly. He was a killer with women and, as I used to see when they approached him, with many gay men who came to the bar. After high school, he studied with Boardman Robinson at the Colorado Springs Fine

Arts Center before enlisting in the Navy, and three years later, after his discharge, he returned to study with him again. During a stint at Cranbrook, he first encountered, through a travelling show of work by Hans Hofmann students, the art of the man who would become one of his lifetime teachers. "Hofmann," he said, "helped me see that, through purely plastic means, pictorial elements could transform themselves into a spiritual experience." In 1950, at 26, Bob went home to Denver for a brief visit, bought himself a used Whizzer motorbike and headed for Provincetown to study with Hofmann. It took him seven days to make the trip, in part because his bike kept breaking down, but also because, in a tale he'd tell me 20 years later at Dillon's, he stopped in Indiana to locate his father. "I had a general delivery address but my father wasn't listed in the local telephone directory and no one I asked had ever heard of him. I was about to give up when a waitress in a diner suggested I ask the local postmaster, who came in every evening for dinner. She was right. 'John Beauchamp?' says the postmaster. 'Sure I know him. Raises coon dogs on the river bottom.' He gets in his car and I follow him on my bike and, on the edge of the Wabash River, we come to a tar paper shack surrounded by various pieces of junk, an old pickup truck, and the tumult of barking dogs. When my father comes out, the postmaster says, 'Hey, John, I got your son here.' 'Your son?' says my father, offering me his hand. 'Glad to meet you!' 'No, John,' says the postmaster. 'Not my son—he's yours!'"

Did I say we had no serious conversations? Perhaps I meant intellectual.

of his artistic generation, seeing Cézanne, van Gogh, and Gauguin in the temporary galleries of the new Museum of Modern Art.

For my father, as for many others, Hofmann's effect was dramatic. His earlier depth modelling of the figure turned into a dynamic painterly space in which what is around the still life or model is as important as the objects themselves. George stayed with Hofmann for four years, serving as monitor, along with Fritz Bultman, from 1936, explaining and translating Hofmann's theories. When Lee Krasner was once asked what she thought of Hofmann's theories she said she really couldn't say, since all she had heard was McNeil's version. Later, George did wonder if he might have stayed with Hofmann a bit too long: Hofmann's "push and pull" and the influence of surrealist Picasso made almost too ready a vocabulary. Still, although his politics were vehemently of the left, my father's work of the '30s remained resolutely modernist: no social realism, no narratives.



GEORGE MCNEIL

"AFTERNOON IN THE PARK," 1992

Disconcerted though he was, John Beauchamp finally got himself together and invited Bob inside for a beer. They sat on a couple of folding chairs at a spool table and searched about for things to talk about, but when they were done with bringing John up to date on the family, there was nothing left but silence. Climbing into the pickup truck, they went back to the diner for dinner, then returned home and slept together in the only bed John had. Next morning, they went back to the diner for breakfast, then Bob took off for Provincetown. John Beauchamp died a couple of years later and his son, needless to say, never saw him again.

Given this background, it was no surprise, I suppose, that he seemed a man who'd never known either the upside or downside of family life or comfortable domesticity. I always thought of him as unattached, a sort of vagabond, not so much a burner of bridges as one who'd had no bridges to burn, and he liked to maintain a similar image of himself. Even when he had settled into a happy marriage, he assigned ownership of all property to his wife, Nadine. They lived in *her* house, drove about in *her* car, and the dog he walked and loved so much belonged to *her*. I wasn't altogether amazed when Nadine told me that, on the telephone once, he introduced himself to his own mother. "Hi, Mom, this is Bob Beauchamp, your son." But years later, when he began making those haunted wheelchair portraits of his brother Gene, who'd contracted polio at the age of 30, I realized how much I'd oversimplified and romanticized him. Not for nothing was he an Expressionist, his work a torture of contradiction and yearning, such a

palpable, violent struggle against politeness and inhibition that one can feel the paint exploding off the surface, battling against the constraints of the figures even as it creates them. In 1985, a few hours after she called to tell him his mother had died—the mother he phoned maybe three times a year and had seen no more than five times since leaving Denver 35 years before—Nadine went over to his studio and found him drunk and hurling his body against the wall. She finally convinced him to come home with her but he did not regain control, if you can call unconsciousness control, until he passed out.

In Provincetown Bob painted abstractly, but when he moved to New York, he began to feel that abstract painting "left too much out." He was poor and living on the Bowery, stunned by the pain and waste that surrounded him. It seemed to him he'd have to wear blinders over his eyes to keep the figure out of his work. On the other hand, he was anything but a realist. Hofmann's "push-pull" was gospel for him, and de Kooning so much his standard that when he went to his studio he often felt that he was going into the ring with him. Figure or not, he always began by throwing paint at the canvas, then blotting and rubbing and scraping, often laying the canvas on the floor and spreading the paint with a broom. Now, however, as he gave in to his lifelong passion for rendering, gave free reign to his dreams and his nightmares, his bestiary began to emerge. In 1969, he made an inventory of his own work for *Art Now*:

"A nude girl jumping rope, horses, blue-bottomed baboons, fish and fish hooks, octopi, preg-

nant woman, water, bricks, flower, feet, erections in the rain, hair, bees in flight, teeth, teardrops, scorpions, fruit, flies, belly buttons, cheese, lightbulbs, crowing roosters, and fighting cocks and barking dogs, a view of the Alps, a maple seed, check marks and X marks, a wet handkerchief, skin tone, meat, snakes, fangs, and snake bites, floating feathers, dancing girls and running diving tumbling men."

Reviewers began to link him with Bosch, Ensor and Munch. The struggle was to let the figure emerge from the paint, not from memory, work on instinct, not thought, keep one's options open, surprise oneself at any cost. "A painter," he said, "is in a constant state of desire; we could be called desire." Once he told me that he tried his best, when walking to the studio in the morning, to work himself into a rage.

Soon after his work became figurative again, he'd formed the habit of pinning large sheets of paper on the wall and using them as sketch pads. Whenever the mood or the need arose, he'd move to the sheet and let his hand go, without regard for polish or composition. The sheets were not meant for exhibition, of course, but after awhile he noticed that visitors to the studio were stopping in amazement before them. In the works' apparent disregard for form was realized a deeper form which seemed to pictorialize the creative process itself. He started mounting the sheets on hollow doors and including them in his shows, and they often sold better than anything else on the

George McNeil

After the WPA, war work, the Navy and two years teaching in Wyoming, George settled on a long-term pattern of work and teaching in New York in winter and Provincetown in summer, initially at Garbage Gables (577 Commercial Street) where "McNeil" on the door of the apartment became "O'Neill" for culture tourists seeking the room where Eugene O'Neill wrote his early sea plays. At this time George shared a studio with William Freed at Day's Lumber Yard while Hofmann held his classes on the ground floor below. In the photograph that Hofmann arranged of the Forum 49 group, George is seated at the end of the third row next to Adolph Gottlieb, looking serious, with Fritz Bultman and Judith Rothschild further back.

Looking at my father's work from the 1950s, I can't readily tell from the composition which pieces were painted in Provincetown and which in his studio in Brooklyn. But the expressionist impasto of some paintings has definitely been thickened with sand, and what George thought of as the Hofmann colors—red, orange, yellow, green—are joined by black and by pale sandy or fleshy creams and pinks. This might have come from looking at work by Franz Kline, who was a close friend of my father's, or it might have been transformed observation. Recently I had the chance to look at Vermeer's "A View in Delft"

from very close up. In the left foreground is a diagonal sand bar painted abstractly in those very colors, and a little sand, too, has been rubbed into the paint so that there is the potential for the paint surface itself to act as a multi-faceted refraction of the radiance of Atlantic light. While I was living in England, every June or so I would look forward to the arrival of my father's "plein air" letter, in which he discovered, as if for the first time, just how much he enjoyed working outdoors. Still, the work was *in* nature rather than *of* nature—mimesis for its own sake he regarded as sentimentality.

Sometime in 1954 or '55 my father had what he called "an almost revelatory insight." He realized "that form should be an immediate transfer of meaning through directly visual means." At this point he left behind Hofmann's essentially cubist-derived formula of the push and pull, with its memory of illusionist space. His work from the mid-'50s onward used an energized, color-based space. The means became the meaning, as it were. In the '50s, the work was wholly abstract, with swathes and streaks of color defining the space. Color and line do indeed cease to be used as linear markers or depth-of-field designators, and cage- and net-like forms are replaced by radiant organic color forms—not field painting, but the painting as a field of action. When figural forms of the body gradually returned to George's work in the '60s, they functioned as ways of expressing this direct form-

generated meaning—"ideated figural images," as he called them. He kept trying to find the right language for what he had discovered: sensation, sensateness, and sentient were recurring terms in this struggle. When, still later, landscape forms returned to his work, it was as what he called "abstractscapes," evocations of the organic from the far side of the discipline of pure abstraction. It was as if, having been there, he could return part way without sacrificing the immediacy of sensate form.

For George, this abstraction was passionately experienced. Criticizing what he felt to be Picasso's weaker late work, he wrote in 1959 that even such weak work "affirms our desire to make abstract art a confession, a prayer, a blood-soaked rag, a sum of negatives, a child's glee, anything at all"—anything at all, that is, so long as it is not slick, illustrative, or self-promotional. In New York, George showed at the Egan Gallery and he was part of the essentially male New York School, socializing at the Cedar Bar and "the Club." However, he was basically a private and even somewhat withdrawn person, his furies at bad art and bad criticism notwithstanding. He did not put himself forward and his lifestyle was not the stuff of anecdotes. In Provincetown, Hofmann and light were the pull, but there were also the horrifically-crowded openings at Nat Halper's HCE Gallery, the Provincetown Art Association, and the group around Walter Chrysler and the Chrysler Museum. Hans

Robert Beauchamp

walls. Like everyone else, I loved these drawings, but it was not until I'd turned in the final draft of my first novel that I realized how much they'd helped me break through a need for order and continuity which had come dangerously close to stifling me. I don't know that I'd have finished the book at all had I not seen these drawings develop on the walls.

For awhile Bob was selling everything he could paint, but then his gallery closed, and he had to scuffle. He'd always made a living from his work, but he had no careerist instincts, no talent for selling himself. A succession of galleries followed, also teaching gigs, a full year once at the University of Georgia, but the work itself was never interrupted. In fact, it grew more internal, enigmatic, and mystical. Ordinary objects found their way into the bestiary—matches, safety pins, apples—and then the pastiche began to contract. For years, it seemed, he painted nothing but Gene. No work, he said, had meant as much to him, and none had fallen so painfully short of the feeling he yearned to capture. Eventually, he turned to other subjects—Dragon Ladies, clowns, animal and bird heads—but his work was almost entirely devoted to singular portrait now. Using color, as he said, to "turn form," he was edging toward the cartoonish, the heads distorted, expressionistic, thickly impastoed, with crushed noses, hair splayed as if from electri-

cal shock, deranged asymmetrical eyes composed of circular brushstrokes in which the pupil might be a single fleck of white leaping off the canvas like an insect. I have to say too that among the heads, I began to see him make more and more attempts at portraying my own. Maybe this was the first time that either of us, still gazing straight ahead rather than into each other's eyes, had ever acknowledged how important our friendship had become. In homage to my passions, he was also doing Buster Keaton and Samuel Beckett. For awhile he even succumbed to the lunatic project of painting the three of us side by side.

The cancer arrived in 1990, withdrew for a couple of years, and returned with a vengeance. Talking almost every day, we stopped looking straight ahead. Bob was afraid of death but not afraid to speak of his fear or cry in front of me or embrace me or hold my hand or curse me when I urged him toward equanimity. "Don't give me that shit, Larry. I want more." Like a dumb beast waking up, I began to realize that this man I'd always taken to be so insulated in his work had brought to our friendship the same single-minded intensity, the same loyalty and devotion and honesty, he'd taken to his studio. I remembered how he'd always listened, not just with attention, but enthusiasm, and how often he'd astonished me by quoting something I'd said to him years before. I remembered how quick he'd always been to read the books I recommended, how absurdly uncritical he was when he read mine. I remembered the time when my wife and I were splitting up and, on the verge of tears, as if his pain and mine were identi-

cal, he showed up drunk at my house at two in the morning to castigate her unjustly. And I remembered how angry he got when I disappointed him, how often he referred to the time he saw me, 25 years before at Dillon's, polite with a woman he knew I disliked. I remembered how, when he'd shown me his work, he listened to my opinions even though he'd always concurred when others of our friends laughed about my visual illiteracy. Most of all, I remembered how excited I had always felt, on leaving his studio, to get back to work myself.

Six weeks before Bob died, Nadine and I and a couple of other friends wheeled him around the de Kooning retrospective at the Met. Happy as I'd ever seen him, he remembered almost every painting, one because he'd seen it in progress through the window of de Kooning's studio on 10th Street some 40 years before. Again and again, he stretched out his hand toward the paintings that moved him and traced the line in mid-air. What was it he loved about de Kooning? "The character of the line. The courage. You can't fake that." Next day, when I went to his studio, I found him pale and short of breath, fighting pain, exhaustion, rage, and sadness, a mere shadow of himself as he moved around in his wheelchair, pulling paintings out of the racks. Lacking the strength for oils, he was doing large watercolors, a number of which proved to be as strong as anything he'd ever done. Cancer had destroyed his body and depleted his energy, but on the character and courage of his line, it had no effect whatever.

Looking around the studio, I saw paint racks filled to bursting on every wall except the one on

and Miz Hofmann were important for my mother, Dora, as well, since she had also studied with Hofmann in the '30s before moving into a career as an art director. Eventually though, my parents found that the rigors of art socializing and art politics outweighed the loyalties and the light. In the mid-'60s we stopped coming.

And in the '60s my father's art career came unstuck. From the Egan Gallery where the New York School took shape, he went to Poindexter, then Howard Wise. Then, for about a decade, from the mid-'60s to the mid-'70s, he was without a gallery in New York. At the memorial gathering for my father at the New York Studio School this January, Mercedes Matter said that Willem de Kooning had asked her more than once how it could be that an artist of such gifts as George—as good as the best, she reported de Kooning saying—didn't have the success he deserved. Mercedes wondered whether it had to do with something of the spirit of the underdog in George. I think she had a point. Everyone who knew my father has commented upon his awesome dedication and integrity. These were enacted often as a spirit of resistance. He never expected life to be easy, and so he wasn't surprised when it was not. He turned down interviews, most notably with the young Irving Sandler, and he didn't go to photo shoots, notably of "the Irascibles," one of whom he was meant to be. He paid a price for this resistance, but artistically they may have served him well.

which he painted. I knew too that he had quantities of paintings stored in the WestBeth basement, in his house in Wellfleet, in a warehouse in New Bedford, probably in a few places I didn't know about. In fact, he didn't give a damn about what he had in storage. He lost interest in a painting as soon as it was done. Given the looming certainty of his death, the thought of such abundance was not an easy one to bear. All this energy he'd mobilized and focused, all the "desire"—what was it but a hopeless attempt to deny the futility of existence?

"Why are you crying?" I said.
"I don't want to die," he said.
"Who does?" I said.
"I don't know who does. I know I don't. It's too soon."

"Wouldn't it always be too soon? If I were 100, I think, I'd call it too soon."

"Don't give me that shit," he said with sudden ferocity. "I want more!"

Nothing I could find to answer that, so we settled into a long silence. Eventually, he stopped crying and we made a few jokes, even managed a couple of laughs. Leaving his studio a little while later, I noticed that, as always, I could not wait to get back to my own. Never had the impulse felt more absurd, but there it was. Even on the verge of death, he made me want to work. I had always been able to count on that, and even in his absence, I am counting on it now. ■

Lawrence Shainberg is the author of four books, most recently, *Ambivalent Zen* (Pantheon, 1996).

When pop art came in and was followed by minimalism and conceptualism, he just kept working, resolute and unfashionable. There are many poetic figural abstractions from the '70s. He was always alive and learning. In his mid-'60s he learned lithography and produced hundreds of beautiful (and almost perversely non-linear) lithographs, some at the Tamarind Institute in New Mexico. When he and my mother returned to Provincetown in 1990 for him to do a master class in graphics at the Fine Arts Work Center, he immensely enjoyed sharing these skills.

Like Hofmann, George McNeil was a great teacher, inspiring and demanding. In the late '80s, the College Art Association presented him with their award for being the best art teacher in the United States. For over 40 years at Pratt Institute and (from the '60s) at the New York Studio School, he taught art history from an artist's perspective, and taught painting. He had literally thousands of students. I keep meeting them, and each one felt an impact. The contained world of teaching gave him a place to express passionate views, and to offer empathy to his students, but allowed him a private place to return to. Again there is the question of the consequences of certain values. That very dedication meant that, like Hofmann, he could be set somewhat to the side, as "mainly a teacher." While the sheer time spent teaching must have been a drain (I remember his fiercely rigid teaching-and-work time tables), it gave him the discipline in art that carried him through into an old age of tremendous creativity.

My childhood memories of Provincetown are of a place of perfect freedom and happiness. Growing up bohemian in ethnic Brooklyn, I was a bookish misfit, a "four-eyes." In Provincetown I was at home. Amongst the summer children, was there anyone whose parents were not artists or psychoanalysts? Perhaps elites with sunburns don't look quite so elite. In retrospect we children accepted as normal a supercharged atmosphere of creativity, competitiveness and exaggerated heterosexual sex intrigue, with consequences still working themselves out for our own generation. Some of these artists' and analysts' children I still know. Christopher Busa edits this magazine. Julian Weissman became my father's dealer during the '80s and early '90s. My brother Jim and I called our father and mother George and Dora from an early age. The locution I am using in this article is the way we spoke. We called them by their names rather than by their roles as some recognition of their lives beyond parenthood. For me at least, regarding my father, I think there was also a darker recognition that while one might be loved, it would not do to demand too much attention. My parent's lives, and their marriage, were less dramatic than those of Philip and Musa Guston, but when I read the memoir of her father by Musa Guston (whom I had known as Inge as a child), I instantly recognized the Oedipal configuration she described so movingly. The public fame of the New York School reinforced the child's instinctive sense that one was being required not to

ask too much from a parent whose high dedication lay elsewhere.

In the '80s, some recognition came for my father, carried along by the neo-expressionist tide. He had the time, and he still had the anger (though never, ever, bitterness over the success of someone who deserved it). He had the confidence that he could do anything with paint, and he began to say so. As I see it, now that nothing was going to happen anymore, he could let rip, and he did, with increasingly erotic, comic, exuberant works. Birds, animals, fetishes, graffiti, and tiny cartoonish figures populate the immensely complex canvases. In the '80s he produced the *Disco* series of wild dancers, then topographical abstractions of the city, with George's graffiti tag signed into the picture, then vivid images of sporting conflicts. He was at the Gruenebaum Gallery for most of the decade, then moved (rather too rapidly, I think) to Knoedler, Hirsch & Adler, and thence to A.C.A. which now represents his estate. In his last years, arising from the pain of my mother's death in 1990 and his own illness, there came a series of psychological paintings, some erotic, some existential, some his version of portraiture. He seemed unstoppable, and he painted up to a few months before his death in January 1995.

Now George is gone, and of the recognized major artists of that expressionist generation, only a sadly diminished de Kooning and Esteban Vicente remain. The entire history of the recognition and misrecognition of the women and men of that generation needs to be re-written. Meanwhile, though, Esteban wrote the eulogy delivered for George at the New York Studio School (read by Harriet Vicente) and at the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Both old rebels had eventually become members. At the Academy, although he could have read it in his own perfect Castilian English, Esteban had Paul Resika recite it instead. Much of the homage was about the essential loneliness of my father as an artist "whose work embodies a full understanding of the nature of painting." What Esteban said was true for all artists, and more so for the generation that felt they had to make existential demands upon themselves. For some, this could be a manufactured demand, but for George it was real. As Esteban said, "any activity which has to do with creativity denotes a loneliness for the creator—a separation from the 'others'—aloneness is a creation of creativity." Through the teaching and example of George McNeil, Esteban went on to say, we "learn that art requires personal sacrifice on various levels." This is true for all of us, but it was most acutely true for my father. ■

Helen McNeil, a writer and critic based in England for the past 20 years, teaches at the University of East Anglia. She and her husband, the English artist Graham Ashton, divide their time between England and Truro. She has just finished a novel and is completing a study of gender and literary modernism.

Michael J. Carter

Refugee

for Jean Valentine

Tears this morning
warm as tea leaking
from a cracked cup.
A son, a brother
was broken is being
put back together—
piece by piece—
a pane of stained glass.
Fragmented: green gold red
lead-veined and lit
from behind.

*Michael J. Carter, a former resident of
Provincetown, currently lives in Iowa. His poems
have appeared recently in Gents, Bad Boys and
Barbarians: New Gay Male Poets.*

Cyrus Cassells

Liberation in Venice

I can say it now,
what his hands meant:
a shamefaced pleasure.
I was small;
he was in charge
of me,
and his peacock name
was the name of this sumptuous
gondolier's city,
this water-blessed city
of your birth:

by some justice,
balanced, inspiring,
now life has given me
a Venetian man.

What was it like
to grow up in Venice?

*Always the feeling of water
and protective stone—*

If I'm unchecked rain,
a gale-blown cloud
on your family balcony,
it's because
your *joie de vivre* fingers,
the glass-green canals,
the filigree
and gold-leaf luxury
release me;

it's because
suddenly I hear
my father recalling,
after long amnesia,
a belt around his throat,
baleful hands hauling him
into an alley—
till we breathe together,
boys of the same age,
father and son,
beleaguered,
mirrored in our wounding;

it's because
I have a choice
to emerge from this maze,
unalarmed,
unmolested,
my garnered power to select
intact—
to love this time
with all my being.

Ellen Dudley

A Blessing

I had hiked to the top of the ridge and sat to rest
against a tree, under a nest, the ocean
three miles down to my left but the smell of it
up here strong and salty. Waiting for the thrush,
I looked up to a low murmur
and a house hove up out of the thicket
and two men, naked, walked across a patio to a flat rock wall
and sat, their bare feet dangling above cypress and scrub oak.
The breeze took their words but the tone was woodwind
and the one with the dark hair drawn back in a bandana
laid his cheek on the blond man just in the soft hollow
formed by clavicle and deltoid and put his right hand
on the other's cock, pressing it between his palm
and the warm slate where it stirred like a small animal.
In the time it took for me to blink my eyes
and swallow, they rose and turned, swift and fluid,
and walked away from me, under the overhang, into the shade,
the blond man's hand on the arc of the other's buttock,
and were gone, leaving me with gooseflesh in the freshening
wind, and the poor, distant beauty of the Pacific.

*Ellen Dudley's first collection of poetry, Slow Burn,
is forthcoming from Provincetown Arts Press in
1997.*

Christopher Dunn

Bird of Paradise

So what if that's what I said
now, after those other first words
that I hid a hole into you with:
With a single bird of paradise
I brought into your side;
the leaf, the strong beak
pressed up into a place
you saved for us, for the idea
that was meant to be filled
and not emptied
but I drained out
fell through you
in a fluttering away of sounds
the kind that ride the air
for longer than they can be heard, felt.

*Christopher Dunn is working toward
an MFA in the Creative Writing Program
at Boston University.*

*Cyrus Cassells is the author of two books of poetry,
The Mud Actor, a selection of the National Poetry
Series, and Soul Make a Path Through
Shouting, published by Copper Canyon Press and
a recipient of the William Carlos Williams Award.
"Liberation in Venice" is from Beautiful Signor, a
collection of love poems forthcoming from Copper
Canyon in 1997.*

Nick Flynn

Father Outside

In the book I am writing a black river
flows down the center of each

page, and on either side the banks
are wrapped in snow. I want to believe
that if I get the story right

we will rise, newly-formed

from the page, that I will stand over my
father again, as he sleeps outside
under the church halogen
only this time I will know

what to say. It is night
& it's snowing and starlings
fill the trees above us, so many it seems
the leaves are singing. I can't see them

until they rise together at some hidden signal

& hold the shape of the tree for a moment
before scattering. I thought faith
was a simple matter, to gather myself

within myself, but it's so hard
to make it all fit, to let the story settle

into the shape of this city, to lay
my father back down in the snow & wait
for his breath to lift his blanket

so I know he's alive. I don't know

what holds me there, suspended
like river-ice, his body stretched out below
me,
the snow pulling the landscape together
as night

pulls us together. He is ink falling

in tiny blossoms, a bottle
wrapped in a paperbag & I bend
each finger back

until the bone snaps. I want to believe

this is how I'll save him, by destroying
his hands. Three girls in the park
begin to sing something holy, a song
with a lost room inside it,

as their prayerbook comes unglued

& scatters. Funnel clouds, a storm
forming along the horizon, a picket fence
will be knocked into eel grass. With the thaw

the river will rise & he will be forced
to higher ground. No one

will have to tell him. From my roof I can see
the East River, it looks blackened with

oil, but it's only the light. Even now
my father is asleep somewhere, if I

follow the river north I could still
reach him. It takes. It's taken

so much time to get here.

The Need to Say *This Happened*

In the early '70s, at the cusp of our adolescence, my best friend Charlie and I would hitchhike into Boston and roam. We were 13 and without greater purpose, though perhaps, unconsciously, I was looking for my father, who I had never seen. Or rarely seen, for I've recently found a photograph of him holding me on his back, beside the tire of an old car. Charlie and I would hang out in the Common with derelict men who called us "young-bloods" and sang "Please come to Boston in the springtime" derisively to passing trolleys of tourists.

On one of these aimless afternoons we came upon an empty cardboard box and spontaneously began to act out a scene. We hoisted it up and carried it between us as if it was heavy, yet fragile, important. We got on the subway with it, walked the Public Gardens, straining, stopping often to rest. A doorman

held the door to an apartment building open and we rode the elevator up, rang doorbells, asked for people whose names we invented. It was a cheap thrill.

Today, in any large American city, that box might be home to someone. It was, after all, big enough to hold a human being. I've been trying to write about the homeless, as they've come to be called. About Robert Francis, found frozen to death standing, about Parker Livingston, found burned up in what had been a cardboard box. About my father. Of the legion of homeless America spawned by the Reagan '80s, my father was one. Even that last sentence sounds too poetic. Alcoholic, manic-depressive, a ne'er-do-well writer, perhaps in another era he would have drifted through a succession of cheap rooms and lived out his existence. But what happened was: He drank. Lost his room. Slept in his cab for a

few months. Blacked-out and hit something. A four-step process, an elevator going down levels. Then I saw him sleeping on a bench, beside the Charles River.

So, I've never been able to write about "the homeless." I'm writing about my father. My friend Marie heard me read some of these poems a few months ago. Afterwards she said, "I don't think people really got it. I think they thought the father on the street wasn't your father, that he was a metaphor. I wanted to stand up and say, 'This happened, this is real.'"

Years before my father became homeless I got a job at a shelter as a counselor and outreach worker. Perhaps, again, I was looking for him. He was gone either before I was born or shortly thereafter. My mother rarely spoke of him except to say it was better he wasn't around.

William Gilson

Pine Bush, N.Y.

The words
of the true poems
prepare for death, sd Walt,
"yet they are not the finish,
but rather the outset."

Here in the cabin some of my old books on the shelves

Little orange hardcover *Zen Buddhism*. Nansen told Joshu,
"The more you study, the further from the Way."

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, paperback, small inked
letters inside cover FEB. 1959 BILL GILSON/30 years
ago, my hand with pen (body and all it's been through
since, and now here, this couch and sound of Alison's flip-
flops, sound of noon insects, cicadas—

"All right, then, I'll go to Hell," sd Huck.

Too many
words,
these pages. Look
back toward beginning—
sliver of wood
under palm skin.

*William Gilson has written five books of poems seeking a publisher. He lives
in northern England where he works on a farm.*

But our paths collided. A few months after I saw him sleeping outside, he appeared at the shelter, and announced he was my father. For the next four years he slept in shelters and in folding chairs and in unlocked cars, under awnings when it rained and on heating grates when it snowed. He slept behind bushes, on church steps, in parking garages. He was robbed and beaten and held out a fifth story window by his lapels for what was left in a bottle of vodka. He lost his toes, one-by-one, to frostbite. He carried a bag full of papers, hospital forms for disability, forms to get meals at churches. He carried socks and a toothbrush and a razor and a comb. He could make himself presentable in a bus station restroom. If you saw him alone at a booth in Dunkin' Donuts, you might not think he was homeless, but when it closed he was stepping only into the night. For months at a stretch he was

barred from the shelter for abusive behavior. He called one of my co-workers a cunt and threatened her. On more than one occasion he was too drunk to make it up to a bed at the shelter, and because he was my father, my co-workers let him sleep on the floor of the lobby. I came upon him once as I began my shift, naked except for a white sheet and ranting. I dreamed of killing him, of buying him a one-way ticket to Mexico. I left that work before he left the streets. Now, he is back in an apartment, but that is another story.

After I moved to New York I passed a large box blocking the doors to an office building. When I kicked it lightly it kicked back and I was initially surprised, but the surprise was instantly replaced by my realization—"Of course, someone lives here" If Charlie and I were 13 today, maybe we would pretend to be hauling someone in our box, or carting a

Timothy Liu

Herring Cove Beach

Fenced-off from the world, men lying
on their backs, the curves of their sex gleaming
under spandex briefs—the way life
desires to unfold—a child
dismantling rosehips, spilling
a secret hoard of seeds as we waded out
into the Atlantic undertow—
tides whisking the glasses off our faces
while a nimbus of men on shore
suddenly lose their hard-won definition
on a stretch of virgin sand where
children hide in the shadows of the dunes—
a boatload of whale watchers
far out at sea, drag queens flailing bangled
arms as if they were going down,
throwing out flowered hats to see how long
they would float—the men on deck
now cheering them on for it came to them
like grace—something that would save us
when our bodies failed.

*Timothy Liu's books of poems are Vox Angelica (Alice James Books)
and Burnt Offerings (Copper Canyon Press), reviewed in this issue.
He lives in Iowa.*

hero on our shoulders, or we could be pall bearers. Or we could be like those trucks you sometimes see, moving a whole house across the land. Octavio Paz has said that metaphor is one of our greatest inventions, right up there with the wheel. But sometimes life refuses transformation. Sometimes a box is simply a home.

—NICK FLYNN

*Nick Flynn's first collection of poetry, Maker, is
forthcoming from Milkweed Editions.*

Hayim Nahman Bialik

Your Two Eyes

translated from the Hebrew by Atar Hadari

Your two eyes shining
like back trouser buttons
and your chin doubling
like a pair of buttocks
oh if you only knew, sweetheart,
how they cheered my sad and tired soul.

Atar Hadari, the inaugural recipient of the Munro Moore Award for Emerging Playwrights at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, is the translator of Songs from Bialik, forthcoming this fall from Syracuse University Press.

Dennis Nurkse

Arnell Rogers

A woman asked me:
are you Arnell Rogers?
That was the year of razor loneliness
and I said, of course I am.
She beamed and asked:
did we meet in Palm Springs?
I nodded: Palm Springs.
Her cheek was taut, waxed.
Behind her, black snow
flickered in a gold-framed mirror.
The reception had broken up:
only the walnut cheese log remained,
stoved-in in the spun-glass chafing-dish.
And your wife of twenty years,
she said, the one who was so gentle?
Divorced, I answered,
gone for no reason,
after a fight I cannot understand.
And the woman bit her lip
and murmured, *I knew you were a stranger.*

Dennis Nurkse is a recipient of 1995 and 1984 NEA fellowships and a 1990 Whiting Writers' Award. His latest book is Voices Over Water (Graywolf). He has recent and forthcoming work in the Hudson Review, Poetry, and the New Yorker.

Gregory Orr

The Excavation

(for my father, on his first dig at seventy)

1
In this dry, stubble field
a thousand years ago,
a nameless tribe lived
where two rivers joined.

Now with sun pressed
to aching back
you dig through chalk
and marl.

Then down
among the layers you crouch
with a tiny brush.
The shards you seek
no bigger than a thumb,
or bits of bone
to tell you what they ate.

2
To tell you what they ate
I'd have to take you back
to where they sat
at the table: your sons
and daughter.

It might be
early morning, before the school bus
comes, or evening with dark
pressing down on the fields.

Their mother's dead
a year now—her presence
less than a whisper.
Your absence is the mystery
their lives close around
as a mouth might close
with a small stone
on the tongue, and so
it's already begun:
their journey to the other world.

3
Their journey to the other world
we might intuit from the way
a skeleton's arranged
in a grave, but this
is where they lived
and signs of life are what we'll find.

I think that dark spot
marks a hearth. I think
your children grew then
grew apart and made
their isolate ways
into the world.

I think
you are an old man
searching for artifacts
and what they might reveal,
here where the hole you dug
gives shelter from a bitter sun
in this dry, stubble field.

Gregory Orr, the author of six collections of poetry, is co-editor, with Ellen Bryant Voigt, of the recently published Poets Teaching Poets: Self and the World (University of Michigan Press).

Martha Rhodes

Individuals

It was the time when birds
ceased migrating

when cats (dogs would follow shortly)
lay on bridges
highways
tracks
at night, in fog

It was the future
and adults realized
their parents had long since
died, though expected
not to

No longer did anyone have
nor desire
a family
and individuals killed only
themselves; even the frailest
most timid
securely, and without hesitations,
walked about any hour
for no one stalked them street corner
to corner, nor worried if they chose
not, one particular night
or ever, to return home

Many learned from birds
and other drunkards to swallow
beakers of fermented berries
before diving down wells—others
needed no such preparation—all
had a method in mind

It was the time
it was the future
it was deliberate

Martha Rhodes is the author of a collection of poems, At the Gate, published by Provincetown Arts Press in 1995, and a second collection, Here, Entering, forthcoming from Provincetown Arts Press in 1997.

Jason Shinder

The Center

A man sees a woman coming near
and thinks, this is the center of my life.
In the dark, in the quiet hours, he dreams
it is a woman who belongs wherever he is.
He desires her so much he will stand
for hours against the screen-door of his father's
house.

Jason Shinder, author of the poetry collection Every Room I Ever Slept In (Sheep Meadow Press), is a teacher in Bemington College's MFA Writing Program and the founder and director of the National Writer's Voice Project. He is also the editor of several anthologies, most recently Lights, Camera, Poetry! Movie Poems, reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

Jean Valentine

Dog Skin Coat

in memory of Lynda Hull

Lynda, the third, last time we talked
we talked about Mandelstam's yellow leather coat—
you told me "it was dog skin."

Ghost money, star
ledger, I'm hanging his yellow coat up here
on your coffin-door:

They'd skin a dog for a coat,
but why skin you?
Why skin a car?
Red open boat, why you?

Three nights after you died I dreamed we were thrown
out of a car. I said, "Lynda, come on, get over to the side."
You laughed, the way you'd laugh to a child, you said
"You only want to drink the gasoline."

Lynda, it wasn't dog skin.
He told his wife he wouldn't wear a coat
made out of "man's best friend."
Ghost star, is there a dog there? Any friend?

Jean Valentine's most recent book of poetry is The River at Wolf (Alice James Books, 1992). She lives in Ireland.

The Freedom of Shadows

BY R.D. SKILLINGS

Rima's first marriage, an elopement in 1950, begot a spate of evil prophecies. Both were 19, the boy an Irish Catholic prole with an uncontrollable temper and half a dozen lost jobs, she a bourgeoisie Jew, salesclerk in a department store, rambunctious herself and sweetly naive, eager to start life on her own.

Overnight the streets of Rochester became an ordeal, while the newlyweds, hounded by accumulating debts, slid downwards from one bad haven to a worse. And every day they were bound to encounter some grim or meddling or mettlesome clan member, and finally they fled to South Boston, where an uncle of a buddy of his had a boarding house, and where, marooned in two rooms, they fought like savages.

A daughter, Nikki, conceived in a grudging embrace, born toward the end of their second year, brought hardly a truce. The father, at odds with the quenchless monotony of his present fate as a housepainter, harnessed behind bib and shoulder straps of white overalls caked stiff with the same, hated color, had always drunk to oblivion; now he began to beat Rima for having canceled his freedom.

One Saturday afternoon, while he was roaming the bars, she took the baby home to Rochester on the bus. Her mother welcomed her first grandchild with unmitigated delight, but Rima's father regarded his apostate daughter as dead, refused to speak to her or hear her name spoken in the house.

Harried by furious phone calls, wretched at home, she filed for divorce, left the baby with her mother, and went to West Palm Beach where family connections had an air conditioner sales and rental business.

Florida had always meant glamour to her, and it felt only fair to seize what remained of her squandered youth. She loved the flights of pelicans sailing down the beach on still wings, thrilled to see how tan she could get, oiling her blond, lithe body, basking in the glances of passersby. Half giddy, half shy, she was wary of complications, and kept to older men. But she slept with too many, soon tired of the pathos of pity, vexed by their unsoothable worries and woes, shamed by their indulgences. Her insides rebelled and eventually she stopped dating, lived on cigarettes and coffee, at dawn would find herself sitting at the kitchen table, playing solitaire, weeping because the cards wouldn't work out and she couldn't go to bed till they did.

Haunted by thoughts of suicide, she was deterred by the deeper solitude of death.

She was briefly distracted by a dental student, who bought her flowers, took her to auctions and concerts, and proposed to her when she got pregnant. She knew it for an act of honor and penance, and secretly borrowed money for an abortion. He went home to Atlanta for a few days to gain some perspective, while she, having followed directions to the anonymous door with no knob at the end of a dark arcade, handed the gaunt woman in a soiled white smock a borrowed sum it would take six months to repay, consigned herself to what appeared to be the kitchen table, sustained after three hours of excruciatingly induced contractions an inadvertent glimpse of the maimed homunculus on its way to the garbage can, was then urged to rest for a minute, received a vial of pills to stanch potential bleeding, was hurried out a different door, found a taxi, and got home safe, her errand unknown to anyone. She recovered quickly, but felt removed from everything.

The dental student never called, nor did she call him. When they chanced to meet a month later it took him three screw-drivers to admit that, though he was deeply fond of, and would never forget her, he was now engaged to his old high school girlfriend. The tragic look on his rosy face made Rima laugh.

She met others, too many to remember, somehow all the same. It was not the life she had envisaged, but there seemed no escape, and she slept around more and more heedlessly, which led again to frenzied boredom, disgust, fear and the resumption of chastity.

These cycles, tinged with hysteria at both poles, lasted until her 26th year, when she fell in love with Abe Katz, a labor organizer on vacation. He was a familiar relief after the gentle sybarites who had drawn her so far from her orthodox origins, and she was suddenly, completely happy.

Owlsh and strong, with a beautiful, untroubled certainty of action and never a doubt about adopting her daughter, Abe moved her to his apartment in Queens, married her, bought a house, conquered his qualms and advanced into management.

Rima's mother however would not part with Nikki, now seven, Rima's never-reconciled father being lately deceased, her younger brother and only sibling gone to an export firm in Hong Kong. The child hardly remembered her real parents, was happy in the only home she had ever known, and Rima accepted the arrangement with blithe gratitude.

Over the next decade she enjoyed a more consummated motherhood. Lillian and Morris were born in 1959 and '61. Abe, bent on security, worked long hours, often spent weekends at the Newark factory office. The babies were often Rima's only company, along with the radio, cigarettes and coffee. Once she dreamed she made love to Janis Joplin with jewelry on. She was amused, but Abe was upset as if she were guilty in fact. She had suppressed her past amours because of his strict conventionality and

therefore was all the more stupefied when one Saturday morning in the seventh year of their marriage she got a phone call summoning her to an executive session with the elders of the firm Abe had served so avidly.

While he stood pale and silent, as if to receive a surprise award, she was presented with the evidence of a lie detector test that had been forced on him, handed in writing the name and address of his mistress, and told that both miscreants were hereby dismissed.

The woman in question, the comptroller, was not present at this event, which lasted but a bare minute, at least in Rima's dazed memory, and only in retrospect did it seem strange and barbaric. Fortunately no funds were missing; no legal action ensued; no permanent harm had been done, except perhaps to Abe's psyche.

It was the wholeness of his guile that stuck with Rima. She had never suspected; he had never let slip a clue. Moreover Abe's secret life seemed virtually to have no consequences, soon faded in their mutual outrage at the humiliation inflicted on them, especially once she had managed to catch sight of her rival, hardly a threatening figure or face—careworn, spinsterish, unselfconscious—whom in any case Abe claimed to be relieved to be free of. He swore, without the slightest pressure from Rima, never again to betray her. She realized that she had reason neither to believe nor doubt his word.

Misfortune made him. With almost triumphal ease he found in Manhattan a better job at twice his old salary, plus stock and princely incentives, but his alteration was finally complete. The last vestiges of class solidarity and anger at injustice vanished, his union bonds having snapped under the weight of wedlock, mortgage and the advent of heirs.

"Growth!" he vowed now. "Enterprise! Productivity!" He dressed ever more fastidiously, had haircuts by regular appointment, and a monthly manicure, expressed only pleasant platitudes, kept an eye on Rima in public, became the epitome of suavity, perfect in deportment, even at home, always totally reserved. She never knew what he was thinking; making love she could hardly tell when he came.

In the summer of 1971 they rented a spacious house on the bay in Provincetown from partners of Abe's, Dal and Ida Shevell, who were going to Spain "for a change of venue." The Shevells spent much of June enjoying their own guest quarters, making sure the Katzes got acquainted with the right people and ways of beach life.

Dal and Ida were redoubtable partiers, forever rolling joints, inventing exotic cocktails, dropping acid, eating mushrooms, wafting from scene to scene. The Katzes acquired a jumble of new names and faces to match each morrow, while the Shevells held their hoarse, uproarious, breakfast postmortems of the past night's escapades and misadventures. Then, after a second Bloody Mary on the deck, they went for a restorative swim, or waded out on the flats, until they dwindled to wisps.

By the time the Shevells left for Barcelona, histrionically bewailing their lot, Rima was half-delirious with joy. The dawns were so beautiful she wanted to weep. The elemental sea and sky reflected perfect fulfillment, and the long days on the beach with Lillian and Morris seemed idyllic, but as the pink and orange sunsets faded and dusk came on she suffered a sharp nostalgia for Floridian nights. Among people whose purpose was to spend not save money, for whom leisure was the rule, pleasure the only goal, ennui the main enemy, she found herself curious again about other men.

"Abe, you've got to take care of me now, I need you, you've got to look out for me," she said to him quite directly one night. "We don't even talk any more."

"I swam all the way to Cold Storage Beach and had to walk back," he said. "I'm tired."

"Abe, I'm in trouble," she said. "Something's happening. I don't want anything to happen."

He turned on the pillow and looked at her unblinkingly.

"You're a big girl now, you've got to cope," he said and turned his face away.

Eventually she fell asleep, but woke at first light and walked the beach, wondering miserably if this were merely all in the cards. She never said another word, but her life once again was a shambles, and at blank moments her heart failed. She was amazed at the incongruous finality of the incident, no more in fact than a phrase. In a week it passed beyond forgiveness, and she sensed in herself a sort of turning aside, a distaste, an impatience, a weariness with this mannequin she had married who drank moderately, patronized the children and swam all day like an athlete in training.

Everything began to seem unreal. Abe was handsome and virile and preferred the company of women, and now Rima half-wished he would have another affair, but he was preoccupied. For the first time in his life he was making a lot of money and seemed to see a clear way into the future. He spent hours on the phone and more and more time in travel, the object of which he no longer made the least pretense of explaining. She was glad to see him go, but the moment he got back grew distraught in spite of all her resolves. Lines deepened around her mouth, digging toward the lips, and she grayed somewhat, at parties sometimes laughed so loudly at so little that he accused her of embarrassing others. She taunted him bitterly for faults she had once been fond of, aghast at her new shrill voice, while the children's moon faces orbited on the edge of her vision. He refused to quarrel, said she was behaving irrationally, left the house. She reverted to solitaire while he slept, cried in secret. One day in resentment she asked if he wanted a divorce.

"What for?" he asked in surprise. "You're having a good time, aren't you?"

She writhed at this remark and worried about the morose children. Lillian looked after Morris, the neighbors frequently fed them, and indeed they seemed to enjoy leading the life of adults, but there were dreadful moments when she saw

them as no more hers than Nikki, knew she had failed as a mother. She dreamt, but did not tell Abe, that after entering a movie theater with the Shevells they had rolled her on a gurney out in front of the screen, where she had given birth to a tyrannosaurus, then refused to nurse it and was ostracized by a circle of almost-familiar strangers who began to grow scales on their lizard-like faces.

On the Fourth of July, sick with hangovers from the previous night's bash, she and Abe walked gingerly into town and stood on the curb to watch the parade.

The majorettes couldn't catch their batons, even on the bounce. The dishevelled band thumped and shrilled out of cadence and key, followed by a few World War II and Korean veterans trying to keep in step, then a troop of Cub Scouts with plastic rifles, after which all was outlandish, private, defiant—floats of psychedelic flowers and rainbow-colored dream-scapes, grimacing freaks and flipped-out types in eastern robes, an Uncle Sam with a small black mustache and a flag with swastikas instead of stars, an alligator on stilts, camp and drag, drug graffiti and peace slogans, hippie families gaunt as migrant farmers, a rollicking reggae band on a flatbed truck, which got grins and loud kudos from a group of otherwise impassive blacks, brown-baggers, staggering stragglers gawking left and right, seemingly unaware they were part of a larger procession. A motley, lethargic train of fun-seekers joined the end and then the whole throng flowed together to the center of town as toward a drain.

It was the nadir of an awful week. Publication of the Pentagon Papers, briefly suppressed, had resumed, giving the lie to official pronouncements, appalling the faithful and doubters alike. The war was being lost; the boys were coming home pell-mell, drug-ridden and unwelcome; the whole country was disintegrating. Tears burned Rima's eyes and she groped for Abe's hand in the crush. He sternly averted his face and she realized with a chill that his eyes too were welling.

He locked his fingers in hers with crushing strength and forced a path homeward through the mob, both of them too demoralized to speak.

The next day they heard that a strayed marcher had fallen off the wharf around noon and drowned, and by sundown another reveler had succumbed to heroin in the men's room of a dancebar.

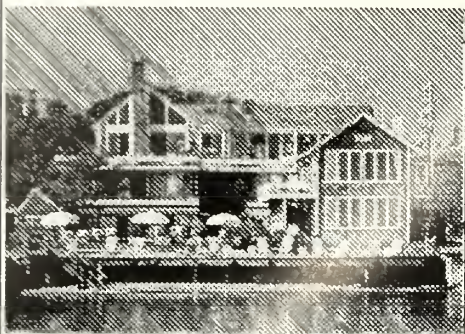
On the 6th three Russian cosmonauts were found eerily dead in repose when the hatch of Soyuz II was opened, reminiscent of the hapless flickers caught behind the fan in the Shevell's stove vent the day the Katzes moved in. The children's eyes had stayed wide for hours, staring at the perched birds, lifelike and still.

"They got in where they didn't belong," Abe told them. "There's no one to blame."

No one to blame, no one to blame, Rima's mind involuntarily rhymed like a radio tune she hated

Hargood House

AT BAY SHORE



Located on Cape Cod Bay, this unique complex, open year round, features fireplaces, private beach, patios and deck. Apartments range from studios to two bedrooms.

Owners/Managers:

Ann Maguire & Harriet Gordon

Owner: Louise Walker Davy

493 COMMERCIAL STREET

PROVINCETOWN MA 02657

(508) 487-9133



THE CAPE CODDER GUEST HOUSE

old-fashioned comfort in the quiet east end
private beach • parking

570 COMMERCIAL ST.

PROVINCETOWN • 487-0131

Deborah Dionne, Manager

but couldn't shake, and she dreamt of birds blurred behind screens, dressed in space helmets and tubular suits.

On the 10th, about 3 p.m., while she was home alone, she heard a gong resound in the street. Then came a pounding at the front door, which flew open to admit a grim man with a pistol who pushed past her and rushed from room to room. She cowered in a corner of the foyer till he departed, ominously touching the muzzle to his lips.

She slid to the floor with relief, and another wild-eyed stranger burst in with a baseball bat. He had a policeman's cap on backwards, an open blue suit jacket over a bare chest, plaid Bermuda shorts and flip-flops. "Did a man with red hair come in here?" he demanded.

Rima struggled to her feet and tried to describe, starting with the mysterious gong, but in fact the gun-waver was distinctly black-haired, and at that point in her breathless account her interlocutor ran off down the street with his bat.

She was still shaking when Abe got home. He listened but found nothing to say, and they never told the children, as the episode raised questions they could not conceive answers to, and it soon slipped from mind.

As if Rima had now to endure yet a third youth, the men she had met began to pursue her less and less discreetly, and one, a friend of Abe's from the old days, whose own marriage was crumbling, declared over cocktails that he knew exactly what was wrong with hers, knew to the last nuance what she was thinking, and how she felt. He said he too was unbearably lonely, and ended by suggesting a tryst on Nantucket. His lugubrious face seemed to weep even more when he smiled; she had liked him once, wished she could comfort him now, but had no illusions, and hoped he was too shaky to notice her wince of repugnance.

What had happened to him? she wondered. His clothes smelt of ill-health and mildew, his hair and beard had grown shaggy, and he exuded a kind of sly, complicitous woe, as if claiming her as kin in his destruction. He came to the house twice more, chiefly to drink it seemed, though he didn't scruple to renew his proposition. Then he disappeared; next she heard he had been hospitalized, but only a week or so later she saw him hunching the street with a glassy-eyed girl who looked to be still in her teens.

Early in August, walking the beach, Rima chanced upon a man she had met at a party named Smitherill. He had talked nearly non-stop in a silken monotone, with an air of inviolable concentration, dominating every subject that came up, like an intellectual acrobat past caring for his audience, and she felt sure he would not remember her.

"I forgot your name," she said smiling.

"John," he said, "and you're Rima."

"How nice of you to know," she said.

He bowed complacently. "I asked someone."

Without prelude or provocation he began discoursing on the black holes of space, shells of burnt-out stars collapsing on their cores of irresistible gravity till they explode in supernovas or disappear into reverse cornucopias of void that swallow even light, previews of the end of the present universe, when every atom will be compacted in the final paradigm, followed by nothing at all, or merely another grand bang and then something else, likely a more or less similar whole.

"And doubtless this is the only possible world," he admonished. "That is to say, the best and the worst."

"Are you obsessed?" she asked.

"I read it in the *Sunday Times*," he said, and went on with his explication, pedantic and dry, refuting objections she had not raised, till it occurred to her that he wanted revenge.

"And yet," and he shook a finger, his eyebrows jumped, and little perplexed commas set off his mouth, "black holes project more energy than anything."

She shaded her eyes at the weirs faintly afloat in the shimmering glow of low tide, said he took an irrelevant view of life, and suddenly he became all agreement. They walked back from the flats, sat down in the sand, gossiped about people it turned out they both knew, laughed frankly, their fingers touching, lingering over matches and cigarettes.

The next morning Rima drove Abe to the airport in suit and bronzed face, eyes clear as a window on nothing. The girl at the counter greeted him with pert deference. A small red plane taxied close. He and three other men mounted the wing, bent and squeezed in, each with a valise.

The slightly rocking plane whirled slowly away, turned down an alley through tall yellow cordgrass, vanished into silence. In a moment the whirring renewed, then roared, grew loud and louder, a flash of red skimmed toward the trees, disappeared perilously, stopping her heart till it cleared the shadow, rose steadily, turned black, diminished to a dancing spot in the blue, and with one last faint wave of sound was gone.

Rima was filled with dread. A neighbor was on her deck when she got home, holding a drink.

"Life's a bowl of shit," Nancy said.

"Really?" Rima said, deciding not to make a drink. "What's the matter?"

"Ohhh," Nancy allowed, "Sammy."

"I just put mine on a plane to Chicago, and he can stay as long as he likes," Rima said pleasantly, and went inside to put on a bathing suit.

A week of perfect weather passed. She walked the beach, dreamy, almost content, picking up anonymous nubs and bits of sea-polished debris—bone, porcelain, stone—shaking them together in her hand like dice, dimly aware of earlier times and people long-dead, then dropped them all to favor some new find, while the pure sun poured down, tingling her skin, giving her a sense of nearly intolerable well-being and sensual delight. At dusk she would stand naked at the mirror, washed of salt, dazzled by

her bright eyes and teeth, white buttocks and breasts.

Then a spell of grey days ensued—windless, humid, all colors, all distances merged—and Rima could hardly tell whether she were in the water or out. The beach was oppressive with rank smells and swarms of gnats, ankle fleas and ferocious green flies that bit back of the knees or stung the armpits, could not be driven off, attacked until killed. At intervals in the stagnant haze a resolute few could be seen twisting and turning and flailing their towels.

She took to strolling Commercial Street with its teeming bars and shops, its stalled line of cars and hordes of day-trippers, rubber-neckers, thwarted sun-seekers, workers intent on getting somewhere, street and sidewalk so crowded it was like bathing in people, awash in a quiet hubbub of voices and feet.

Ragged kids sat on the curb like sparrows or wandered with sleeping bags, asking each other, "Know anyplace I can crash?" There was always a bereft-looking girl with tangled hair and a thin kitten clinging to her breast. Everyone seemed to have a guitar. Periodically some minstrel would thrum a chord, bend an ear to appraise, then still the strings with gentle palm, and gaze off into space again. Saturating all was an odor of patchouli and incense, and a slightly-crazed atmosphere obtained, as if anything might happen, as if the lemming mutterers at any moment might head for the edge.

Often the emaciated, hirsute young men looked quite saint-like, and once Rima happened on a poignant scene in the high school parking lot, where a burlap-clad couple was giving away their possessions—bed, chairs, bureau, records, dishes, shoes—with terrifying expressions of beatitude. A blended murmur of approval, awe and contempt came from the cynical or greedy or grateful, who made off speedily through the mob with their loot.

But the strangest, most haunting occurrence was something she never saw. Amid the crowded noon-time street a man's voice, startled to an unnatural tenor, cried out: "I don't believe what I just saw, I don't, I don't, I just don't believe it!"

Rima spun round with her girlish gaze, stood while the throng jostled past, looked and looked but saw nothing, could not even identify the incredulous one, but she wondered wildly what he had seen, and it grew into an obsessive worry that woke her before dawn or gave her pause at mundane junctures.

She had begun to spend her late evenings at a more or less perpetual party, which only got into full swing when the bars closed and held sway until dawn in a white summer house high on a dune, with the lights of Wellfleet winking through the grove of sinuous locusts that climbed the slope. The jerry-rigged place was all windows of different sizes, screen porches and tiers of little terraces built with railroad ties and lighted by lanterns, and on wet nights there was always a robust blaze in the noble boulder fireplace. A crew of attractive youths, offspring apparently

of the host and hostess, kept the music playing, the liquor flowing, snacks passing, and no one was ever in want of a thing.

MacKenzie Rexx and his wife Venus were right out of Fitzgerald as all were bound to observe, though elders thought the scene had a touch of the Gay Nineties. Mack himself was a man all charm, all grace, never at a loss to put the awkward at ease, and he always wore a fresh, white, dress jacket and rose cummerbund. On exceptionally hot nights he dispensed with a shirt, baring a shapely chest well-tanned and feathered with lushly-curling, silvery hairs. Venus was the most animated of matrons, the slimmest, most silkenly-voluptuous and insinuating that could be imagined, yet good-hearted, down-to-earth and dignified withal, so that Rima felt less and less an ingenue as the nights flew by.

"They don't take part," someone said. "They set these things up to watch."

In fact the house was full of mirrors: one could hardly escape oneself, and a whole wall of the living-dancing room served as a screen for an ongoing film of past festivities, while an attendant youth went about unobtrusively documenting the current moment. A little nerve-racking at first, the effect soon proved addicting—total experience, all senses engaged—so that one was apt to become bored elsewhere, and make for the MacKenzie Rexxes, once midnight had tolled.

"They work hard all winter. He makes a lot of money. They come here every summer. They just want to give people a good time," retorted a regular with asperity.

Such banalities were scoffed at by cynics looking for flaws, hoping to see a downfall.

Certainly the Rexxes were not libertines themselves. Though they always had a glass in hand it was always empty, and they were reputed to care only for each other, as the number and fondness of their children and their children's friends seemed to attest.

"All things human come to ruin," said faintly-smiling Smitherill. "What will happen here?"

Chagrins and triumphs went cheek and jowl, and one might get bodily caressed or ego bruised or both before the night was out. The selection of young men standing around looked like rough trade, but proved to be well-spoken and genteel, at least until Cupid emptied his quiver. Rima found herself courted by a dissolute and inseparable pair, Stoodles and Ponze, with whom it soon grew impossible to cope.

She enjoyed them sober, for they vied with gallantries—luxurious state of affairs—but toward the wee hours they invariably got bombed on the limitless cases of beer stacked in the two refrigerators in the Rexxes' vast, comforting kitchen, where someone was always frying linguica and chopping onions and potatoes for hashbrowns to go with platters of buttery, creamy, scrambled eggs.

All in a trice, as if a joker had juggled a vase or a twerp twirled the chandelier, her swains changed totally, forgot they were pals, gave chivalry a kick in the pants, no longer attended Rima



*Centrally located
in the heart of
Provincetown*

Built in 1856 by Timothy Prosperous Johnson, a prominent figure in Provincetown's fishing industry, Heritage House features thirteen rooms on three floors, a large living room, two verandas, and views of the Harbor. With fluffy towels, crisp linens, delicious coffee and homemade muffins for breakfast, you'll feel right at home here in this friendly, comfortable atmosphere.

Free Airport Pickup

7 CENTER STREET
PROVINCETOWN, MA 02657
(508) 487-3692



22 COMMERCIAL STREET
PROVINCETOWN
MA 02657
Telephone (508) 487-0706
800-276-7088

*Unique rooms
with spectacular views at
the very tip of Cape Cod*

in tandem, maligned one another by turns, and half-suffocated her with their demands.

Stoodles tended to wheedle and whine, then grovel, finally descend into piteousness and threaten suicide unless she yielded, while surly Ponze made imperial declarations, received rejections with cool, stoical gloom, but went on secret rampages, appearing a day or so hence with black eye or bandaged knuckles, once confessing to have bumped into a telephone pole, then punched it.

As soon as one stalked off to sulk the other popped up full of hope. It was like being caught in a vise, though gratifying not to have lost the knack of driving men mad, and with little or no effort on her part—quite the contrary—and once glommed on there was no shaking them off. Bemused, she wondered what the outcome would be, mocked her plight with the thought of going home to her mother, joked that a husband might yet have a use.

"You're cutting a swath through P-town," Mack remarked, and Rima suppressed a vestigial blush, though she still shook her head, reassured to hear nothing carnal in his voice, see only perceptive sympathy in his eye.

And later that night, to her amazement, she danced solo, shameless and bold, as if she were in her own bedroom, and the next night with trepidation watched the scene re-enacted on film, to such sincere-sounding plaudits that she felt flattered and proud, though she suffered a momentary, disconcerting thrill of attraction to the unfamiliar, abandoned figure.

All in all, it was a strange and exhilarating initiation, as though all the old wisdom had been wiped away, or somehow didn't count any more. A new age was being born and everyone could tell. Occasionally it even felt scary, as when The Angry Brigade blew up the top of the tallest building in London.

"What are they angry at?" Rima asked.

"Greco-Roman-Judeo-Christian mores," said Smitherill and grinned.

"What's your sign?" inquired the rap-artist, read her palm, made some computations with the numbers 1,9,5 and 0, declared that she furnished further proof, were any needed, that Cape Cod Bay was the site of special spiral forces, that visitors from advanced civilizations had already reconnoitered the scene, that he himself was the receptor of inter-galactic vibes, and was even now making himself master of the lotus method of interpreting the messages of spirits from former times waiting to be reborn at both the basic and nine higher levels of awareness, his incredible powers stemming from ancient lore and the secrets of sacred texts like the Kabbalah and the Tibetan Book of the Dead, which combined all knowledge coded as enigmas, wherein even the lost runes of the Aztecs, North American Indian shamans' residual prayers and the magic dimensions of the Pyramids were harmonized with the confluence of solar wind and lunar wave to make manifest and bring to the fore

with imminence all the mystic unities, end human greed and strife, and promote eventual, if not immediate, triumph of tarot.

His ethereal voice ran flutelike on, never pausing, never returning whence it came. All these many marvels were doubtless pleasant to contemplate, and his disciples nodded and murmured as if they had parts in a choral lullaby. And what was the harm, Rima wondered, in reciting such malarkey if it made one happy? Did he really believe one word? What did he want? Not sex apparently; that, he said, was pre-spiritual.

Distracted, then attracted by aromas, he floated off toward the kitchen and his circle dispersed, harmonizing an amen of om.

Most pot just made Rima drunker, but the passed joint, perfectly-rolled, slim as a knitting needle, smelt like perfume, and after a polite half-toke she was paralysed.

"Vietgrass," said the lean soldier on leave with crewcut and tattoos. He sniffed the last thickening fumes, pinched the roach, put it on his tongue, swallowed, narrowed his eyes, stood up from the couch lithely without using his hands, bowed from the waist, winked and went away saying, "Here comes reality!"

A golden glow enclosed her. She could neither move nor speak, but only look about the room with awed attachment to everything and a gulf-like sense of the distinct importance of each moment. She began to grasp the point of recording, the fad for tiny cameras and bugs and TVs the size of wrist watches, the discrete particularity of the world. What if there were nothing more to life than the obvious? What a fix she was in, Stoodles on one arm, Ponze on the other, benevolent Mack in the doorway and Smitherill, still as a heron, watching them all in the tilted mirror on the first stairway landing.

Respite came in the form of a blessed skein of brilliant days and the crazed street subsided. Even the MacKenzie Rexas' was deserted and Rima with relief went out at night only to swim at high tide, riding the calm swells like a boat adrift, listening to the slap of waves against the sea-wall, feeling herself one with the waters, went to bed early, rose at dawn, creature of light.

But late one afternoon, while she was sunning on her deck, John Smitherill came meandering, eyes upon the sand, and she hailed him, invited him up, strove with fierce, metallic laughter to goad him from his morbid trough of nihilistic ironies, forced talk of gratitude for the flawless weather, posed and preened, flirted and teased, until he made an off-hand proposal, lightly-spoke but phrased as a challenge, and she accepted. Their eyes grated together like quartz, and downing their drinks they stole unsteadily upstairs in the silent empty house.

She took off her bathing suit and stood looking wryly at his deeply-tanned, bald head while he held the bedstead with one hand and struggled to free his ankles with the other.

"My god," he said, "it doesn't take you long."

"Once I make up my mind I don't delay," she said.

They threw back the covers and took possession of her bed with lascivious nostalgia, though she noticed he never lost his pained look and the act itself, so long postponed, yet so absent of ardor, hardly marred the surface of their casual cordiality. At length he rolled on his back like Abe and stared out the window. Four boys on the patio below were drinking tequila and talking about Calley and Manson.

"What are you thinking about?" she said.

"Death," he said.

"You shouldn't always," she said.

"Why not?" he said.

"Because," she said in exasperation, "you can't do anything about it."

"All the more reason," he said.

"Poor man," she said, "with your mind in a cage. Crib I mean."

"Listen," he said, very grave, hushed, portentous. "It's the one thing you can count on."

"I have no doubts myself," she said.

"Look," he said, "at that round shadow on the ceiling. Ever since I came in it's been getting bigger and bigger and now it's going to blot you out at seven o'clock exactly."

"You too?" she said, glancing from the shadow to the clock, which showed half a minute to the hour.

"Oh no," he said with grim sincerity, "I'm going to live forever."

"That's the spirit," she said.

"The empty hourglass," he almost sang. "The cigarettes, the booze, the drugs. This is a true presentiment. What's left is your last thought."

"Don't be silly," she said and glanced at the shadow, which did seem to have grown.

"Goodbye," he said.

"Goodbye yourself," she said, but had the sensation of falling off a mirror, diminishing, diminishing, unable to scream, and the shadow convulsed.

Smitherill sat bolt upright. "Time to go," he said in a queer voice.

"Is it seven?" she said, reaching for her bathing suit, relieved to find she could still move.

"I've got to meet someone," he said apologetically.

"At seven?"

He nodded, occupied with his fly.

"Are you going to sleep with her?"

"God knows. I hope not."

"Then don't," she said.

He laughed violently, like a bark, and led the way down to the beach, ebb tide orange in the low sun. They paused to part.

"Another seven gone," he said. "You made it through another day."

Their eyes met and she saw his arrogant addiction, as in a dark pool the silvery, darting fish of his fear; then he blinked, turned on his heel, trudged back the way he had come, hands in pockets, head down, and she, sick with disappointment and disgust, waded out toward the weirs till the tepid water ringed her waist.

At ten, beset by the jitters, she walked into town, patting the cats along the way. Every

flower was in bloom; the moon was full, the night nearly as bright as day.

Intermingled throngs eddied both ways around a traffic jam by the Fo'c'sle. As she entered the bar two muscular, blond men in tight tank-tops were inspecting the leather display next door. A rust-bitten Ford jounced and stalled. The driver hung motionless at the wheel, gaping at them through silver, oneway sunglasses, while his wife in holiday dress twisted to disentangle a writhing of kids in the back seat.

Rima was so close she saw herself doubled in his silver glasses, identical, startled women in orange blouses and white slacks.

Inside, panicky, she sat down on the end of the nearest bench, and pretended to hunt in her purse, but the drunk opposite blurted at her bowed head some awful revelation, for when she glanced up he glared at her with dread.

She shook her head absolvingly, puffed out her lower lip as a show of compassion, and after a moment he turned aside and resumed muttering to himself.

She escaped to the bar, bought a mug of beer and sat in a window, looking out sidelong at the mob, wishing she were invisible. Three members of a VFW convention up-Cape, pondrousbellied in their old dress uniforms and overseas caps, festooned with sashes and ribbons, swaggered by drunk as lords, much as they might have reeled down the Champs Élysées, except they wore angry sneers. Long-haired boys and girls wandered like Samoans in the garish light. For an instant Rima thought she saw Nikki and felt a strange, unfamiliar regret that it wasn't her. A woman in a flowing black gown went by on the arm of another in a bowler hat, who curtisied, spread her tutu, showed her teeth like a shark. At the long, center table two boys with gaudy tans were interrogating four girls who glanced at each other before answering. In the street a small grey man knelt to tie a child's shoe. The rollicking Beatles owned the jukebox.

Rima focussed on a fat fly on the thickly urethaned, name-carved table. At first it seemed immobilized by the sticky surface; then it took several finicking steps and changed the angle of its body like a bomber on a turnstile. She bent to examine its repulsive, hairy head and geodesic eyes, then very carefully covered it with her hollow-bottomed mug and watched it through the glass. It didn't stir, nor did it fly when she lifted the mug away.

She kept putting the mug over it like a dome and it kept not flying away, apparently enamored of spilt beer or dulled with surfeit or the onset of fall; and finally, somehow cheered, tinged with indifferent contempt, freed in spirit, she swept it into the air with a cavalier hand, fished out another cigarette and turned defiantly to the passing world, let come what might. ■

Roger Skillings is the author of three volumes of stories—*Alternative Lives* (1974), *P-town Stories* or *The Meatrack* (1980), and *In a Murderous Time* (1984).

"Am I Dead Yet?"



MARK MORRISROE, 1989, PHOTO GAIL THACKER

Mark Morrisroe at 23

BY RAMSEY McPHILLIPS

Mark Morrisroe was a highly respected artist, filmmaker, and controversialist who moved through the mini-movements, eccentric personalities, scandals, and power-jockeying of the art worlds of Boston and New York City from the late '70s through the late '80s.

One part tell-all, two parts theory, and three parts epic tragedy, Am I Dead Yet?, at bottom a trashy novel, depicts a pivotal time, when art, society, and Mark Morrisroe went into the emergency ward, and didn't come out. Ramsey visits Mark, who is dying in the hospital, and finds him in the throes of a bloody suicide attempt. Mark refuses help and demands that Ramsey read the biography of his life on his death bed. Using the manuscript as their guide, the two men spend Mark's last living hours embellishing the life story. The following excerpt takes place when Mark was 23.

Mark swung his stiff leg off the New Jersey PATH train and began his trek to the East Village. He loved coming into the city to attend art openings, he loved being seen. It was a hot day in September, and the masses were still wearing the uniforms of summer—skimpy shorts, sleeveless t-shirts, sockless designer shoes—clothes that Mark found revolting. Even with the 100-degree weather, he was wearing his official Art Gallery attire—straight-away black suit, perfectly pressed white cotton shirt, and his signature Florsheim dress shoes. In his hand he clutched the crumpled neck of a brown paper bag holding his Polaroid camera. He was dripping in sweat.

Mark walked slowly, hovering near the wall of the train platform, out of the way of the rushing commuters. It was better not to be knocked

around. It gave him time to stare back at those staring at him. After the commuter flood died to a trickle, he moved to the steps, taking each stair one at a time, a crippled person trait often evoking pity from observers. But not with Mark. There was no embarrassment involved in his affliction, no sadness attached to his limp. When Mark hobbled, strangers couldn't take their eyes off him. To the on-looker, Mark was not a crippled man; he was a brilliant physical actor. When he almost fell over, with his arms sweeping the air looking for balance, his craning neck looking for the nearest support railing, pillar, or wall, no one came to his rescue. No one dared to interrupt the show.

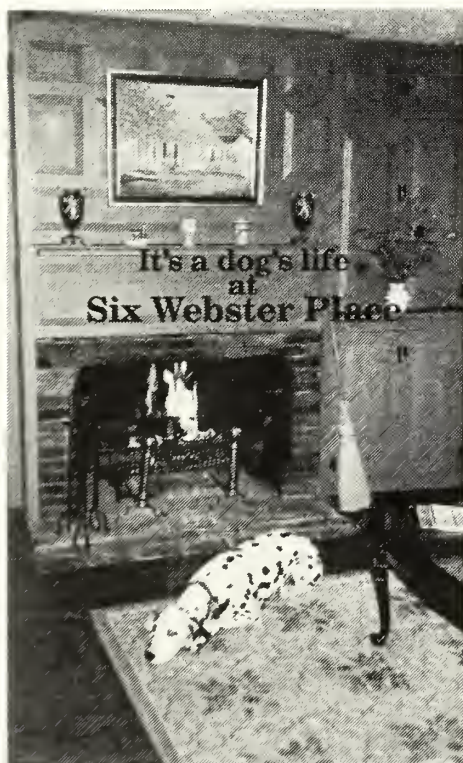
The magic of Mark's teetering limp was its ability to call attention to a comedic face—too big a nose, too wide a mouth, his black hair greased back like plastic all combining to radiate thoughts of theatrical significance, vibrant thoughts that ran across his face like headlines on a marquee. New Yorkers who didn't know who Mark was instantly felt, upon seeing his dramatic crippled show, that they should. Mark looked famous and he used his limp as his opening line; it was the prolonged stares of strangers that he took as applause.

Mark reached the street and smiled at the panhandling itinerants hanging out near the station entrance. He kept moving. These were the audiences Mark knew not to entertain. The long walk into the demolished zone of the East Village always weighed heavy on Mark's bad leg. He was too broke to catch a cab. He was forced to walk. Each block he traversed got progressively more desolate, more ruined. He dragged his leg around piles of bricks, chunks of bathroom tile, over the discarded faded clothing of immigrants who had once lived in this neighborhood wearing kerchiefs, but left for better neighborhoods, as better Americans, wearing denim. It was exhausting. Inevitably, he would have to stop to hang onto the side of one of the crumbling brick buildings to catch his breath. He kept alert to avoid stopping at the corners habitually used as repositories of human shit and piss. It wasn't so much the smell of human waste which bothered Mark, but the smell of wasted humans—those who tagged this neighborhood with the excrement of soup kitchens, those who wasted the muse of opiates to waste themselves. More than the wastrels, Mark hated being by himself. His impatience to get to the gallery, to see his friends, to talk about his art career, made him quicken his pace, quicken his exhaustion. The faster he tried to walk, the longer it seemed to take. His bum leg had already turned to Jell-O, and he was forced to lock his knee so that he could swing his whole limb out in front of him like a stiff board used to steady an unruly teetering weight.

Every block in this neighborhood had its flavor, and the block now before him, his last before reaching the Fun Gallery, was reputed to be the worst. He saw the sea of scourge loitering down the avenue. He knew his exaggerated pre-



Mark Morrisroe
Estate
Represented by
Pat Hearn Gallery
530 West 22 Street
N.Y.C., N.Y. 10011
tel. (212) 727 7366
fax 727 7467



Six Webster Place
a 1750s Bed & Breakfast

*
Six Webster Place
Provincetown, MA 02657
(508) 487-2266
1-800-6 WEBSTER

amble and business suit would cause the high flying drug dealers to glue onto him like black tar.

They saw him coming. Young Hispanic men bounced glances off one another to alert the hierarchy of hidden delivery men, money exchangers, and up-front men—the bare chested skinny men wearing cut-off jeans who moved in Mark's direction like aggressive chess pieces—moving onto the sidewalk from their fender perches, falling out of groups to lean individually on telephone poles, dumpsters, and building corners. A black woman in a cherry red sun dress embraced a giggling naked toddler playing in an overflowing fire hydrant and moved to sit on a stair landing that led to a deserted, boarded up apartment entrance. She was taking a seat to watch.

Mark passed the first few men who watched him limp by. To them, Mark's limp was caused by his need for a fix, not by a gun shooting seven years ago. They sold what Mark needed to walk straight again.

Two men stepped in to join Mark in his walk, one just a little ahead walking backwards, the other just a little behind clipping at his heels. "Works?" the first dude whispered to Mark. Mark winced, said nothing, kept limping along. The second one, a mere teenager who had already succumbed to a plethora of vagina-pink tattoos that were printed across his cocoa-skinned torso like Sunday comics, added, "You need a fix man?"

"No, I'm just passing through, thanks," Mark replied.

"Read that again," Mark demanded from his hospital bed.

"Which part?" I asked.

"A mere teenager who, who, . . . that part," Mark said.

I obliged him, and my eyes traveled back to the sentence on the page: "A mere teenager who had already succumbed to"—and Mark chimed in to finish reciting the line again with me—"a plethora of vagina-pink tattoos printed across his cocoa-skinned torso like Sunday comics."

I looked back to Mark. He was laughing. I watched his frame do nothing. He had no more flesh to roll or expand or quiver as he chortled—only his Adam's apple, which bounced about his throat, gave any indication that he was enjoying himself. I smiled, very big. His eyes smiled too. His Adam's apple stopped moving. Then he stopped breathing. His mouth slowly opened like a fish.

"Mark Dirt, baby, it's me, Girl. Can I come in?" came a voice from just outside the hospital room door. Jesus. What timing! One of Mark's oldest friends from The Museum School days, "Girl", a stunning redhead, skinny, effervescent and medicated, was peeking her head through the door. She looked gorgeous, an emaciated Fassbinder vixen clothed in black leather and tights.

"I would have been here earlier," Girl said in her whiney, thick Jersey accent, "but I stopped to buy eyeliner; things are sooo cheap in Jersey City! Oh, hiiiiii, Ramsey . . . RAMSEY!" She pinned her eyes on Mark.

"SHIT! She blurted out. She just stood and stared at Mark for the longest time, then she finally addressed me again. "Why do you look so fucking content? Oh, I knew I should have brought my camera. He looks so sweet."

Girl's cat stripe makeup, two swipes of eyeliner that ran out the corners of her eyes, was suddenly wet and rolling down her cheeks. "Did it just happen?" she sniffled to me, "Oh honey, I'm sooo. . ."

"Girl, shut up," I said. "He's not dead—he's laughing."

"Laughing?" Girl asked, her voice faltering.

"Mark, MARK!" I shouted.

Mark's eyes moved in the direction of the door where Girl was standing. She shrieked, cupped her hands to her mouth. The florescent lighting buzzed. She moved her eyes to the smears of blood on the walls; she was looking for a reason for this to be real.

"Hi, Girl," Mark said cheerfully. "You're just in time to hear Ramsey read the part in my biography where I met Madonna."

"Oh, FUCK," Girl gulped, "I thought, I mean, I thought he was dead."

"Mark, are you dead?" I asked.

"No." He giggled childishly.

"Have a seat, Girl." Girl slumped down the wall and onto the floor. "So, where was I? Oh, here." I found my place in the manuscript and resumed reading.

The second one, a mere teenager who had already succumbed to a plethora of vagina-pink tattoos printed across his cocoa-skinned torso like Sunday comics, added, "You need a fix man?"

"No, I'm just passing through, thanks," Mark replied. Mark switched the brown paper bag, which contained his camera, from one hand to the other. He needed his right hand free in case he had to defend himself. Mark's black business suit, his perfect hair, and exaggerated nervous smile contrasted with the beatific sweating exposed skin of his two new leering escorts, and made for a portentous street drama.

Mark kept moving, his eyes riveted on the naked black baby cradled in the arms of the observant mother sitting on the stoop. The baby knew to watch, to keep still—the street teaches early that to cause a scene is to cause a problem. Mark was the complete antithesis of this credo, and it was his limp, his suit, his gleeful expression that was about to get him killed. Somewhere between Avenue A and Avenue B, Mark had gone from movie star in the subway, to moving target in a drug bowery. Only in New York City can you be a celebrity for having done nothing on one block, and murdered for doing too much on the next.

The mother repositioned the baby on her lap so that she could bob the child up and down with its little feet just touching her knees. The humidity soared. She tugged at the strap of her dress and looked back from the sidelines as if she was a proud suburban mother watching her offspring preparing to clobber a rival football team. Mark's eyes stung from the flow of sweat pouring off his perfect, stiff locks of hair. His face had a look of complete horror. Mark turned on

his heels and swung his bum leg in a giant sweeping arch. The two dudes lurched out of Mark's way, screaming and spitting with laughter as they mimicked his crippled trembling amble. The flesh and the muscle and the tattoos of the drug dealers hovered just inches away from Mark's spastic run—dodging his flailing arms which unintentionally shot fist punches in the direction of the teasing thugs as he tried to keep his balance.

The brown paper bag, which he clutched in his hand, flipped back and forth then suddenly ripped, sending his Polaroid camera straight into the face of the older drug dealer. Something cracked—a bone, a camera mechanism. There was sudden silence, then a piercing shrill giggle coming from the delighted child. The drug dealer bent slowly, touching his knee momentarily to the ground, then rose to stand tall. He drew away his hand from his face. It was bloody. Mark froze. He too stood up straight, then planted his feet and prepared to be murdered. "I'm sorry," Mark said calmly. No one was quite sure whether Mark was apologizing for his camera breaking open the man's face, or whether he was apologizing for this pitiful and ironic end to his promising life as a famous photographer. The two dudes smiled, looked to each other, started laughing, walking away, then running very fast. They were doing the 100-yard dash down the street. Mark stood in wonder. The older one held his hand over his eye socket, now filled with blood, and stared back over his shoulder at Mark as he disappeared around the street corner. Mark turned his shaking head in a victorious aside to the mother and child. She looked back with contempt, then lifted the boards of the blocked entrance to the abandoned building and threw the naked child to someone inside. Mark watched her fall on her belly and shimmy out of sight, gone.

He turned back around. The street was suddenly deserted. He was completely alone. Mark heard a faint fluttering noise and whipped around to see two pigeons on a nearby window sill. They were fucking. He looked to his camera, which lay on the street. It had popped open, the film cartridge ruined, totally exposed.

Out of no where, a silver grey car came reeling around the corner, followed by a square, enclosed truck, more screeching silver cars that went up on the sidewalks, squaring off the block at each entrance. Car doors and truck doors flew open giving entrance to dozens of men in bullet proof vests, wearing helmets, wielding assault weapons, taking pivotal looks at all that was not there. Mark stood in the middle of the street like a general—his head tipped upwards in a commanding salute, his new-found prowess unmatched by any drug dealer alive. His newly arrived regiment of huge men, alien in their attire, conquering nothing by being several seconds too late, fixed their positions on Mark. To them, Mark was no general. He was just an overdressed yuppie, a customer of the heroin trade, needed to make this drug raid a front-page success.

"Get your hands off me. I could very well collapse to the ground. You have no idea what I have just endured! Look at my smashed camera over there on the ground. Had you not arrived, that could've been me." A dark-haired Irish Catholic policeman responded by wrenching Mark's arm around into a half nelson. "My God, this is worse than being attacked by the drug dealers—let go of me you idiot."

"Where's your fucking needle, you fucking junkie scum!" barked the officer. He wasn't about to frisk Mark for fear of getting poked by a stray needle. Mark started laughing. The cop grabbed Mark's perfect hair pulling his neck back until Mark started choking.

Barely able to speak, Mark said, "I am no 'fucking junkie.' I AM AN ARTIST! and in case you haven't noticed, you're brutalizing a cripple." The officer examined Mark's body with leering glances looking for signs of a disability. He saw nothing of the kind. He shoved Mark's arm further up his back. "Oow. Stop twisting my arm."

Several policemen, rummaging aimlessly into stripped abandoned cars strewn about the street, looked in the direction of Mark's predicament. They were bored.

"Get him in the squad car," yelled a commander from the lead car. The officer pushed Mark across the street but Mark's bad leg got caught underneath them sending them both toppling to the ground. Mark ended up underneath the cop who somehow had managed to keep Mark's arm in a twisted knot. The fellow cops roared in sudden philistine guffaws.

"HELP! POLICE BRUTALITY!" Mark screamed into the pavement.

"Mark!" screamed a familiar voice. Mark looked up from his tussle to see Tabboo! shoving his way in between the battery of officers. The offending officer kicked Mark's buttocks as he jumped off his back to disappear into the sea of blue and green uniforms; a witness had arrived. Tabboo! was out of his usual drag attire and was in his street uniform: black t-shirt, jeans, tennis shoes. Trailing along his side, dressed in black dance skins, platform stilettos, and a frilly Mexican mini hoop-skirt, came a dirty-blonde bombshell. She was snapping gum and looking tough. Her hair was tied with shreds of cloth. She gently pushed one of the policemen out of her way to take a viewing position at the center of the scene.

"Let me take care of this, Tabboo!" she said. Tabboo! smirked, then glared over in the direction of Mark.

"Which one of you is responsible for knocking this fag down?" No one came forth. She looked deeply into the eyes of all the men, exploding small bubbles of gum at the entrance of her mouth. "Which one of you is in charge?" she demanded. No one came forth. She paced just inside the inner circle of men, while Tabboo! stooped to pick Mark up off the ground.

"They think I'm some junkie, or something," Mark began to whine. "I was just trying to meet you guys at the gallery, and these two thugs, two drug dealers..."

"Shut the fuck up," barked the girl. "Now," she said with a pout, "the three of us are going to walk out of this mess and you big, bad policemen are going to watch." Before anyone could take a breath she pirouetted around on her toes, set her hands to her hips, and sashayed like a tramp through an opening in the circle of mesmerized cops. A single whistle came from the mouth of one of the men, a hiss from another, a lone whoop and finally a crescendo of yips from the regiment of cops. Tabboo! clutched onto Mark's arm and gingerly guided him through the opening like a nursing home attendant walking a patient back to his room.

"I want to press charges," Mark began. Tabboo! violently shook Mark's arm, stopping him from uttering another word. "You're going to get us fucking killed. Shut up and walk," he spit into Mark's ear.

The blond jumped in behind Mark and Tabboo! She walked backwards, throwing her hips from side to side, blowing Marilyn Monroe-like kisses to the distancing crowd of policemen. "Happy Birthday, Mr. Police Commissioner, haaaappy birthday, tooooo, you!" she sang.

They escaped. The three walked half a block until Mark finally broke the silence. "Thank you. I cannot thank you enough. You saved my life. I HAVE to take your picture; I'm famous."

Mark's comment lit up her eyes. "Yes, I can see that," she said. Come to the Pyramid Club tonight and catch my show. I love having my picture taken." She reached out to Mark's face, wiping off a few flecks of gravel that had stuck to his cheek and chin. Then she turned on her heels and jogged down the avenue out of sight.

"Fuck, Mark, do you know who that was?" Tabboo! said.

"No, but God is she something."

"She calls herself Madonna, and she's going to be big."

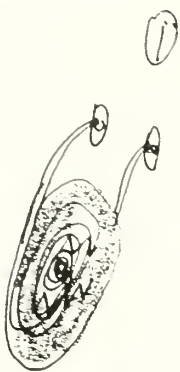
"Madonna?" Mark questioned. "Queen of Marys is more like it. I guess I should be nice—she did just save my ass. I'll have to get to know this Madonna girl, 'cause I'm going to be big, too."

"You are perfect for each other," Tabboo! said sarcastically. "Two conceited geniuses. Come on," he motioned to Mark, "I have to get home and work on my number about being Armenian. Lots of famous people are Armenian—Cher is Armenian."

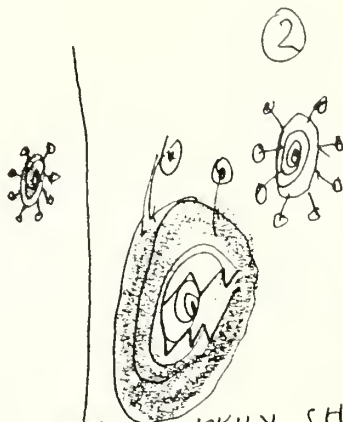
Tabboo!, adoringly holding Mark up as he slowly limped along, awkwardly sauntered back through the East Village to his apartment. Mark rambled on about his ensuing career as a famous artist while Tabboo! hummed the tune to "Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves." They were happy to be friends. They were happy to be alive. ■

Ramsey McPhillips is a visual artist who is writing the authorized biography of Mark Morrisroe, Am I Dead Yet? He lives in Oregon.

COSMIC SKETCHES BY PETER HUTCHINSON

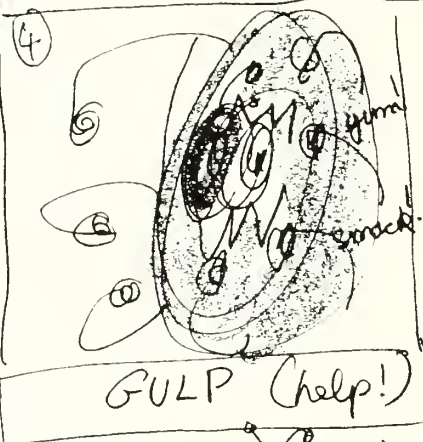


WOW, A FEMALE. I SURE
COULD USE A PIECE OF THAT

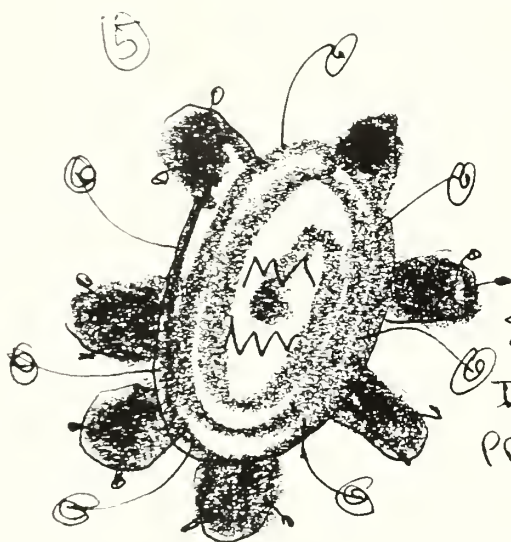


AND LUCKILY SHE'S SMALL

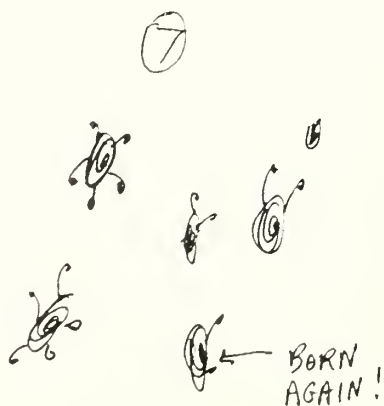
UH-OH. SHE
WASN'T SMALL
SHE WAS JUST A LONG WAY OF



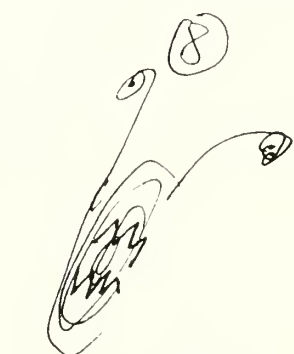
GULP (help!)



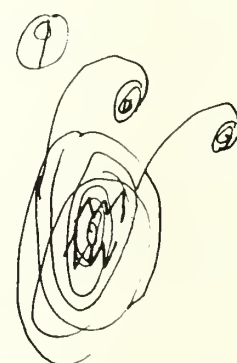
SOMETHING'S WRONG.
I THINK I'M
PREGNANT.



BORN
AGAIN!



BUT I THOUGHT
NOTHING COULD EVER
COME OUT OF A
BLACK HOLE



OH, I GET IT.
INFORMATION IN
INFORMATION OUT.

He Comprehends His Dream Before It Fades

BY IVAN GOLD

Moving on, he found his progress halted by a tiny old woman bent over a walker, but he inched agreeably along behind her as she labored toward the subway. It wasn't as if he had a pressing need to be somewhere. The custodian who worked on the same floor was just then headed home, but Jason gestured at the hobbled creature in his path, mimed a helpless shrug, and motioned Willie to a spot on the queue right beside him. The black man from Augusta, Georgia (where a youthful Sams had slogged through basic training), stroked his wispy beard, made an adjustment to his Red Sox cap and joined him.

"You mainly a book writer," Willie said, reprising an earlier chat (for they often sat and smoked and chewed the rag on the bench outside the Writers' Room); "can I ax you a personal question?" Jason, expansive, clapped his coeval on the shoulder. "When you do a book," Willie said, "you like to be puttin in there what done already happened, or what still be gwine to happen?" The author made a show of thought, not letting on that he felt constricted by the choices. He was about to express a guarded preference for what done already happened when from the corner of his eye he caught sight of Jacob, skirting the cripple as if she were a bump in the road, and making a beeline for the entrance to the underground.

It wouldn't have cost his son an arm and a leg to be more considerate, and he shouted something of the sort, and Jake, startled, responded with an indignant scowl thrown back over his shoulder. But being the kind of kid he was he immediately relented, directing his father's gaze by way of explanation and amend to the smashing young thing he was just then pursuing down the subway stairs. In the glimpse Jason caught before she swirled out of sight he thought the girl had looked familiar, but he failed to place her, until an offstage voice boomed helpfully, SHE'S A COMPOSITE, upon which he noticed in her every nubile female he had ever, down a slew of years, taught the art of composing prose fiction to, and would have gladly inducted, had the chance arisen, into far greater mysteries, with passion, compassion, and an absolute absence of consequences. Since she was now out of sight he felt free to embroider, concluding that she hadn't been that young, not your average undergrad by any means, a few years older than Jake, who (in the dream as in life) had just turned 22; a woman, in other words, had vanished down those littered stairs, who might have blessed the

aging master, a scandalously neglected but still vital 62, with far greater bounty than her firm but pliant flesh, or ultimately cloying adulation.

Ah but it wasn't Jason Sams in hot pursuit it was his hotshot son, re-entrenched these days, after a brief grapple with the actual world, in his old room at the ancestral hearth, back there where if you had to go they had to take you in; it was the heir apparent off in Orphic chase—while Pop discussed narrative strategies with the porter—of Pop's own vanished opportunities.

Still, proud paterfamilias that he was, fatherhood in the long term apt to be assessed, he often thought, as his crowning achievement, he should be *kvelling*, not regretting, should he not? Crowing to old Willie (the father of 12), "There goes my boy!" Ambivalent as always, and still cocooned within the dream, Sams was propelled to the heart of the meaning of the dream. A degree unusual, this, but in his day he had offered up his darkling visions to any number of shrinks, a few necromantically-abled, so how, quick study that he sometimes was, could he have failed to pick up and file away a thing or two? The gist was this: his never very steadfast Muse had (like the rest of us) grown longer in the tooth (might well have drunk away some healthy fraction of her brain cells, too); had become, alas for her, a frail crone hunched over a walker, and in such straits could hardly assist him, but that sad fact apart SHE BLOCKED HIS WAY, and beyond even that, to take the cake, HE WAS COLLUDING IN THE PROCESS.

In the glare of this much clarity he came awake, hailing distance from his wife, who snored lightly on the dangerous edge of her portion of the queensized bed, lost in the maze of her own inner life, which lately, all too often, was at loggerheads with his; the huge orange and white cat who loved to eat trilled for his breakfast at bedside, an incongruous sound that might have issued from a bird, Sams had to pee, Sams needed coffee and a cigarette, his feet hit the floor, National Public Radio clicked on, an orotund baritone intoning a global series of vile and violent events, some unfolding not that far from home, the dream departed. ■

Ivan Gold is the author of three works of fiction recently reissued by Washington Square Press, Nickel Miseries, Sick Friends, and Sams in a Dry Season. He was a senior fellow in residency last year at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

Books
To Tickle
Your Fancy...

Provincetown
Bookshop



246 Commercial Street

WEST MAIN BOOKS

West Main Street (next to Library)
Wellfleet • (508) 349-2095

A Full Service Bookstore

Summer hours: 10-1 & 4-9
Closed Sunday
Off-season: 12-5 Mon.-Sat. & by appt.

BOOK PARTIES, READINGS
AND OTHER EVENTS
WEEKLY ALL SUMMER
Call for more information

HERRIDGE BOOKS

Quality Used Books
In a Village Setting

EAST MAIN STREET, WELLFLEET, MA

508-349-1323

Open April thru December



JENNY HUMPHREYS, "CUNT.QUILT," 1995

Domestic Comforts and Body Parts: An Interview with Jenny Humphreys

BY PAMELA MANDELL

Jenny Humphreys, a 34-year-old artist and Provincetown resident, found her way to the tip of the Cape via her 1993-94 fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center. Born in California and raised in Baltimore, Humphreys graduated from Yale and went on to receive her M.F.A. from Indiana University. She has also received fellowships from Millay Colony and Yaddo, and had numerous solo and group exhibitions in Philadelphia, New York, and Provincetown.

The day before Jenny Humphreys and I got together to talk about her work—her movement from painting to mixed media and installation pieces—an article about her "cunt.Quilt" appeared in the *Provincetown Banner*. The piece featured the word "cunt" applied on each square of the otherwise homey, pink, yellow, red, and blue-flowered patchwork quilt. It had been hanging for less than 24 hours in Berta Walker's West Window Gallery when several complaints were made to a town selectman and the police. Berta Walker was contacted in Florida and the piece was promptly removed. She explained that al-

though it might be appropriate for a private exhibition, there had been a miscommunication and she had not given her approval for its display in the very public window on the street.

Pamela Mandell: I am intrigued by the fact you have created several in-your-face type pieces. Is it your intent to incite conflict or controversy?

Jenny Humphreys: With the quilt, I was more interested in exploring, examining the power of the word. As I said in the article, I can't forget the first time, in the kitchen of a restaurant in Philadelphia, I was called a cunt. It had a big impact on me. I'm also interested in the contrasts: the harshness of the word with the warm fuzziness of the quilt. But I definitely never planned to create controversy. I remember other times people have responded with outrage to things I have done. It always surprises me.

PM: I didn't realize there had been other instances. You started out a painter, right?

JH: Yes, I painted largely abstract paintings for 12 years. I didn't really begin the kind of work I'm doing now until I came to the Work Center, but there were two other points during my time as a painter that I was drawn toward other installation-type pieces and both times I got strong responses. The first time, in 1984, when I went to Indiana from New Haven, I was struck by the green, geometric lines of the lawns and sidewalks of their museum, which is a scaled-down version of the east wing of the National Gallery designed by I. M. Pei. I got this idea in the back of my head and decided I just had to do it. Although I'd never eaten them, I'd been fascinated by those Hostess snowballs for a long time.

PM: Snowballs? You mean those pink, round, coconut things with the sticky center?

JH: Yeah, I went to the Hostess outlet on Wednesday, bargain day, and bought 250 snowballs. I remember I was with some friends and when we came through the aisle with this cart loaded with snowballs, the woman at the check-out just looked at the cart and said, "My husband likes them too, but he only eats the center." Early in the morning I lined the sidewalks with the snowballs, mimicking the geometry of the lawn, and stuck toothpicks with the American flag in each one. I remember being driven by a desire just to see what it would look like.

PM: It sounds pretty funny. How did people respond?

JH: Well, after I set them out and photographed them, I went to breakfast and when I came back they were all gone. The next day the student newspaper featured an article entitled "But Is This Art?" with a picture showing the university groundskeepers spearing the snowballs with those pointed sticks they use to pick up trash. Although a few people in my department knew I had done it, lots of other people didn't and during a student crit at the end of the year I showed slides of the snowballs along with slides of my paintings—some of the other students were really outraged.

PM: It seems there is a parallel to your snowball piece and the candy legs you placed in the small pox cemetery.

JH: One thing is clear: food is definitely important in my work.

PM: Yes, a lot of the domestic comforts, your use of hand-stitching, old-fashioned materials, like cotton, flannel, gingham, and familiar foods, like candy, or the sugar in your "Sugar Raft."

JH: Popcorn in my "Sugar Babies."

PM: "Sugar Babies?" Those huge cotton dolls shaped like fat bowling pins?

JH: Yeah, filled with popcorn. When I was making them I was thinking of slogans based on the idea of a sampler. On the front I stitched slogans like "Pink Bitch, I forget everything," and on the back I had sayings like "Pretty much nothing wrong with me."

PM: It seems for the women of our generation, 30- to 40-year-old women, that we are concerned with domesticity, not in a way that we

want to throw it over, as the women before us did, but to figure out our place in it—we don't feel enslaved by it, but it seems an important part of our heritage. I think of Janice Redman's fabric-covered utensils or Janine Antoni's gnawed chocolate sculpture.

JH: For me there is a particular kind of domestic comfort in cooking and hand-stitching which I can bring to my work.

PM: Yet slogans like "Pink Bitch" are definitely not domestic or comforting. Also, they seem to be about something other than domesticity. Your "mine" pieces, for example—the stacked cake boxes stamped with "mine," seem to be about identity and ownership, particularly about your identity as an artist.

JH: I do think about identity, the body, about being an artist and a woman and trying to maintain integrity. Perhaps I define my art with these borders—maybe a defensive stance.

PM: But no one can take your art from you.

JH: Yes, that's true, an idea can be mimicked, but your art is like your fingerprint.

PM: Considering the harsh or defensive stance of some of your work, how do you include the viewer?

JH: It's a struggle between not compromising my ideas but not completely alienating the public either. I don't want to win people over, I want to make them think.

PM: We've been talking about more recent work, work I saw during your fellowship at the Work Center, but I was curious about the other time, during your painting years, that you experimented with other media.

JH: In 1990, when I was living in Philadelphia there was a juried exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art—1500 people applied and only 120 or so got in. Several people had the idea of having a Salon de Refuse, after the one in Paris, and to have a show for some of the artists who'd been excluded from the museum. It was an incredible experience. Over 400 artists exhibited their work and about 50 of them organized it—renting the armory, getting a catalog together. An architect even designed the floor space. Word got out, donations started coming in, and the museum ended up contributing a few grand.

PM: Doubtless feeling guilty over the publicity the show was attracting. What work did you put in the exhibit?

JH: It was a time in my life when I wanted to do something bigger. I wanted to do something fresh, something to do with the body. I began thinking about raw meat and started looking into ways meats are kept from spoiling. I ended up talking to an ice company that makes the huge ice blocks which are sculpted for food shows. I was getting close to Easter. I went to the Italian market in Philly, into these shops that sell whole spring lambs. It was overwhelming: lambs hanging up, some stripped of their fur, some not, pelts lying on sawdust on the floor, and all the while little kids were looking on with their mothers. I saw a truck packed with lambs hanging inside

it. I spoke to a guy at the ice company about freezing the lamb in a big block of ice. I really didn't think they would do it since he told me it would be against the strict codes of the Health Department. He said he'd see what he could do and asked me to call back in a couple days. It was getting very close to the show and I didn't know if I would have anything. When I did call back he said, "Okay, but you have to pay cash and I'll have to do it after hours." About half an hour before the show I drove over to pick it up. When he pulled it out with the tongs the first thing I saw was the lamb's circle of teeth. I was amazed. He'd done an incredible job. It had taken 36 hours to freeze the 11-pound lamb. He had placed it in the ice with the legs splayed, like it was prancing, suspended. It was skinned and you could clearly see, through the ice, the blue USDA stamp and the lamb's blue eyes. I quickly took it over to the armory and put it up on blocks in a tub with the head and feet down.

PM: How was the opening?

JH: About 8,000 people came, actually. It was during a heat wave, 90 degrees outside, so kids were coming up and putting their face against the ice. People's perceptions about it varied widely. Some people thought it was a dog, some people asked me if I was a vegetarian. It did generate a lot of response.

PM: Did the meaning of the piece change for you when you saw it exhibited?

JH: It was so completely raw, no artifice, direct: lamb and water. I realized I'd really done it for myself. It could have been a self-portrait. The frozen lamb seemed to be about self-protection or, perhaps, about stopping time.



JENNY HUMPHREYS, "FROZEN LAMB," 1990

PM: It reminds me of Damien Hirst's dead animals—the shark, cows, and, more specifically, the pickled lamb.

JH: Yes, it was before I'd ever heard of him. A year or so later, a friend called me up and said: "He must have seen your lamb! He must have seen your lamb!" Of course, it's just one of those coincidences in art that happens. But I think Hirst and I are coming from different places. Once the ice really started melting, and the lamb began to emerge, I took it out of the show. I wasn't interested in being gruesome. Afterwards, we had a barbecue and we roasted the lamb. I was glad it didn't go to waste.

PM: But a whole skinned lamb in a block of ice *does* seem disturbing.

JH: Yes, it was. Although I'm not interested in making "nice art," shocking people is not my main objective. In all these pieces, it's important for me to do this work first and foremost for myself. I thought about this when I took my candy legs out to the small pox cemetery. Because there wasn't a formal exhibition—the only people who ended up seeing the legs were two friends and whoever happened to walk through the cemetery—I didn't know who might see the piece or how they would respond.

PM: These were the candy legs you made two years ago at the Work Center?

JH: Yes, originally I made 66 legs of different flavors and colors from scratch. Using a lollipop recipe and a cast aluminum mold I'd designed, I spent five months figuring out the technique. I consulted with a Plymouth lollipop maker and toured a mannequin factory in Long Island City.

PM: At that time, though, you exhibited the legs?

JH: Yes, I'd had the legs in two shows, one at the Work Center and one at Berta Walker's West Window. After two years, they were beginning to disintegrate and there were six boxes, 50 pounds each. I had to do something with them. Initially, I had thought about putting them out in the dunes. But the small pox cemetery came to mind because of its history as a dumping ground. I thought, it's out there, it has a story. I thought of the hollow where the Pest House used to be.

PM: Can you tell me a little about the small pox cemetery? I've been there once. It's in the woods. I remember going down a ravine where white pines suddenly appear and then there are the little gravestones beyond.

JH: After my first trip out there, I felt affected by it and wanted to know more and began thinking about the history of the place. It made me think of Pompeii—another place where time has stopped. I got a copy of the town physician's report where he basically chides Provincetown's residents for keeping it a secret—fear had prevented them from reporting the disease right



JENNY HUMPHREYS, "CANDY LEG," 1995

away and it spread. Anyway, past the grave-stones—short markers with numbers on them—is the old foundation of the Pest House, now a large grassy hollow. This small pox hospital is where the victims stayed in quarantine until they recovered or died. It was built in the mid-1800s and used until 1872 or '73. Only six stones remain even though 14 people were buried out there.

PM: How did you get them out there?

JH: Nine trips, over four days, back and forth between my storage on Pearl Street and the cemetery. But I moved them, 50 of them, over the span of a week. I lined the foundation of the Pest House with legs. It was the third week of October, and they were lying on leaves and pine needles. After I had put them all out there, it rained several times and I went back to see them and take pictures. It smelled like licorice and sometimes a leg or a foot had been dragged from the hole, partly chewed and left in the underbrush. As they decomposed they left deposits from the candy ingredients: root beer barrels, coffee beans, tea, sage, poppy seeds, fennel seeds, mint, barley, bean, lavender. By Thanksgiving they were all completely gone except for the licorice smell and some beans and lavender.

PM: The pictures you took of the melting legs are haunting, they look like real decomposed human body parts. I can't help thinking of the woman murdered in the dunes, with her hands chopped off. You mentioned that you'd had some spooky experiences on some of your treks out there.

JH: Yes, on one of my first trips, I was carrying five legs on my back in a gym bag. I was half-

way down the dirt road before you turn off into the woods and I passed a guy with a gun. It turned out to be a hunter, but I was spooked. Another time I saw a guy, who seemed like a homeless person, sitting on the path. Later, I came upon a brand new shovel in a True Value Hardware bag. It wasn't there when I went back.

PM: Did you think someone was burying a body?

JH: It occurred to me someone might be burying a pet. But when I passed that shovel and stepped onto the fire road, I thought: I don't belong here. Although I'm not religious, I began to think of the cemetery as a sacred place. It was around Halloween and I thought of the Day of the Dead and how it's celebrated with picnics on graves and how people leave candy. Also, every time I passed a particular place on the path, I thought about the Indians and their history there. I wondered how many had been killed by small pox. Around this time, I began researching my own family's ancestry—my maternal side dates back to 1632. I discovered that some of my ancestors, early settlers in Massachusetts, had been kidnapped and ransomed, and others killed. I also learned that, in 1692, a direct ancestor was hung as a witch in Salem. Anyway, it's like that idea in chemistry, precipitating—I kept spinning these ideas around and hoping something would precipitate.

PM: Just hearing about your leg installation I was uncertain of its respect for the dead. But the pictures tell another story. The decomposing legs remind me, in a fresh and disturbing way, not just of the unknown dead in that cemetery, but of the still unidentified woman in the dunes, of all the unknown soldiers who died of disease, murder, and everything else.

JH: I still feel it's a bit of mystery to me. I was very attached, no pun intended, to these legs. It took me a long time to make them and I had them around for several years. At first, I felt I'd abandoned them, left them out there to disintegrate and decompose. As soon as I put them in the hole, it became something else, something that wasn't mine. I saw it like a huge net covering time and space, encompassing my family, things hanging off and being entangled. I realized you can't unentangle everything.

PM: Was it a pivotal experience for your work or for you in relation to your work?

JH: I don't know. Things are much more complicated. For instance, I see the quilt as a one-liner. I feel pushed toward making more projects which embody ambiguity—even if it means being scared, or my work not being accepted or seen by anyone. At its best, I want it to be a medium through which a voice speaks. That's where the mystery lies for me. ■

Pamela Mandell, a fiction writer, writes frequently about artists. She lives in Provincetown.



SUSAN BAKER, "MATERA, ITALY"

Susan Baker in Italy

BY KEITH ALTHAUS

Susan Baker's work has a frankness and directness, an honesty and absence of tricks or special effects. Our age devotes itself to the manipulation of the audience, to devices to hold our attention, to seduce us, and each momentary effect has the long-term result of reducing our attention span and our ability to feel without increasing stimulation. Should we be surprised that the tools and lore of public relations and advertising have leeches their way into the art world, and come to dominate it? The simultaneous heightening and deadening, numbing and jading, of the senses has affected the thinking, sub-consciously at least, of most contemporary artists. In the late '60s, when Baker was coming of age, art schools paid a routine allegiance to a waning abstract expressionism, and everyone else was not considered serious. Baker was one of those who thought if one is not going to be considered serious, why not be truly not serious?

She catches a stranger's eyes, looking right at you, not staring, just looking. To eyes trained to expect pyrotechnics instead of steady flame, oblique refractions of idea-filled shadow boxes rather than real darkness, her work can be disconcerting. Her new paintings of Italy and the Cape display this passion for honesty and directness, which grows on the viewer like health returning to an invalid. These paintings retain an immediate link with the viewer because they are not filtered through a "system" of painting, or a field of ideas already focusing on achieving an anticipated reaction. Consequently she is drawn less to mannered and stylized painters than ones like Fra Angelico, or Hopper, or closer to home, Mary Hackett, who was equally committed to clarity and directness. Only the boldest, whose confidence is tempered by joy and exuberance, can take the risks inherent in such straightforward art, which supplies no hiding places.

From her earliest mature works, the near abstract "intestinal" paintings and drawings of the '60s, through the sculpted "environments" of the '70s, the autobiographical paintings of the '80s, to the jewel-laden and embellished artifacts of the '90s, as well as the artlessly artful, sober land-

scapes of the present, she has drawn without strain upon a source at once remote and immanent.

Her recent landscapes of Matera, Italy, capture the lead and light, the obscurity and power that cling to that strange city, and the sense of ancient otherness which emanates from the stony habitation, built upon a hill honeycombed with caves continuously lived in for 1000 years. Today squared-off façades disguise their entrances. In Baker's painting we feel something of the underlying structure, the magnetic skeleton beneath the flesh, the soul of this dark place. Weighted as it is, this brooding landscape is not oppressive. The sky is so fresh, free of struggle, as after a rain or many weeks of winter grayness a suddenly blue day, if only for a few hours, a proof just enough to sustain faith. The colors of this painting, dramatic and profound, reflect less the strong blacks of summer shadows or night skies and more the indoor darkness of things stained by smoke and cooking fires, scorched and charred, and the cold is that deep cold which climbs from pavements and concrete floors traveling up the bones to chill the heart. ■

Keith Althaus reviewed the work of Mary Hackett elsewhere in this issue.

Imagining Memory: An Interview with Mary Behrens

BY JAMES ESBER

I met Mary Behrens in Provincetown in 1991 after we both arrived as fellows at the Fine Arts Work Center. Somehow the group of fellows that year, diverse as it was, embodied enough good will and mutual respect that differences often led to challenging debates rather than fragmentation. The talk was often political. We talked about race and gender, sexuality and sexual preference, sometimes just about sex. It was a kind of utopia for me, a miniaturized world where people disagree but don't hate each other for it. The strong rapport I developed with Mary that year has continued to the present. What we share in common is a fascination and obsession with pictures. It is essentially the reason we both define ourselves as painters despite the unconventional materials we work with. Growing up in the '60s, sheltered in the suburbs, and nursed on the hyperreal constructs of television as much as baby formula, we both formed skewed notions of reality. Experience has supplanted most of these fabricated pictures of the world with real impressions and made us cynical about media manipulation. It has demonstrated that the experience of reality and of pictures is fundamentally different. The difference has to do with "being there" or not, with being the one "pictured" or not. My work tries to emphasize the difference by severing the connections between images and reality through

manipulation and distortion. Mary's work, in most cases, uses images as a way of reconnecting or empathizing with the real. The altered images in her work are a vehicle for reverie, the raw materials to construct the memories of imagined experience. Sometimes we achieve bits of self realization by listening to what we say about ourselves, sometimes we understand ourselves better by listening to what others say about themselves. This spirit of questioning and careful listening has characterized my conversations with Mary for the last five years. We last spoke in March under the thick gray sky of Boston, as the east coast emerged from one of the snowiest winters on record.

James Esber: What are some of your earliest memories of looking at art?

Mary Behrens: They're not that early because I wasn't brought up in a household that valued looking at art. When I was about 19, out in Western Canada, I started looking at art books because I wanted to teach myself about art history. I was involved with this person at the time who had a couple of art books, one was the History of Modern Art and the other was Janson, the basic text.

JE: Those are pretty dry sources for getting inspired about art!

MB: They are, but that's what I had at hand.

JE: I have this idea that the mature paintings we make somehow relate to the way we used to make art when we were very young. For example, when I was young I used to draw constantly from cartoons and photographs, and I was never able to go outside and draw from nature. I think it's interesting that you and I both start with the photograph as an object, as a model.

MB: Well, photographs and images were my nature when I first started making art. I wasn't interested in going out into nature. The idea of the natural was something that came to me through other images. My "plein air" was books. I can go out into nature, say to the sea or the countryside, to be soothed, to really enjoy the beauty, but it doesn't inspire me to work. Looking at other pictures does. I suppose it has something to do with access to other interpretations of life, especially, for me, interpretations of nature, war, family life, even romantic love.

JE: Your work is suffused with reverie, and reverie and nostalgia can be an important part of looking at documentary photographs, particularly old ones.

MB: I think that when people come to images of the past they often feel a sense of longing. Nostalgia is an easier term for me than reverie. Nostalgia is a real characteristic of photography, because the moment we take a picture, it becomes lodged in a memory bank of images. These images can then produce a sense of bittersweet longing for what is gone. Think about certain family photos or wedding pictures or high school photos. Something about human nature



MARY BEHRENS, DETAIL OF "FALL" #4

compels us to long for the past. Why? Because we're mortal, and we don't want to die. The past can represent a more hopeful time. I've never been aware of this as a clear-cut motive, but I think one of the things that drives me to make the pictures I do is this desire to re-shape memories—to invent fictional memories for myself.

JE: Nostalgia implies a longing to go back to our own experience of an image, to its time, but in many cases you're dealing with material that predates the viewer's lifetime.

MB: Yes, that's why I use the term "imagining memory." Memory is highly selective. It's uncanny how two people can have such a completely different take on a similar experience! You've said before that "imagining memory" is an oxymoron, and it is. What I mean by it is creating work which might serve as a catalyst for pretense. If one can imagine having had a certain experience then one can pretend there is a memory of it. Say, of fleeing your town with your family and just the clothes on your back or a memory of not saying something that might have saved someone's life or of being a soldier running through the snow in 1942 in Russia, fighting and killing. What I'm doing is fiction, it just happens to be visual fiction, not literary. On a small scale, I'm staging things to trigger some kind of historical memory that's not there, but could be there.

JE: Some of the photographs of World War II are so horrible that, even though I look at them again and again over time, I cannot make that leap of understanding or empathy and imagine myself in that time and place, witnessing those events.

MB: Right. That's why, when I started to do my "War" series in Provincetown, it was important for me to deliberately not use images of the Holocaust, not use Auschwitz, not use bodies piled high, not use images directly about the horrors, but to use images that were more per-

ipheral regarding what happened. Those direct images are like sacred ground that I don't want to touch in my work.

JE: So you feel there's material you do and don't have the right to use?

MB: Any artist has the right, though of course you have to be aware of the consequences. Using an image of heaps of bodies in Auschwitz is irreducible. You can't reduce that image to anything else. It is what it is. It's also hard for me to see any poetry in an image like that.

JE: Your work demands that a viewer slow down, and contemplate the meaning. In a way, it's romantic. How do you see this innocence in relation to work that's more detached and ironic?

MB: In some ways, I'm contemporary, in other ways I'm really old-fashioned. Old fashioned in the sense that the materials I use and my motive for using them is more metaphorical than deconstructive. The materials are used symbolically. Even in my "Instincts of Nature" series, where I used a lot of vinyl and plastic, the materials are what they are but they also point to ideas about the artificial vs. the natural. So the work is romantic but there is a critique of other things happening simultaneously. But certainly visual beauty and visual depth are important to me. Being consciously ironic is not.

JE: The visual beauty aspect, that's not part of a photograph alone, but is more the domain of painting?

MB: No, I think it can be. I'm doing work right now that's just photographs. In the past I've felt that I had to do different things to them. I still like to think of myself as a painter, because I think I put things together the way a lot of painters put things together, more so than the way a photographer puts things together. Photography is kind of new for me. I've used photographs for years, but being a photographer is new to me.

JE: Remoteness comes into your work through the fact that you rely on what is witnessed and photographed by other people rather than your own sources.

MB: I have this belief that naturalness and spontaneity are not possible in photography. Even

having a snapshot taken, people feel uncomfortable and put on a certain look they think will look good for the camera. The best photographs of people are when they're caught off guard. Remoteness is an aspect of photography.

JE: There are plenty of photographs that catch people unaware. Walker Evans once took a series of photographs of New York City subway riders with a concealed camera. This was back in the early '40s. He took the same kind of pictures on the street of passersby and called them portraits, but they're pretty startling because these are people with no idea they're being photographed. Some are looking directly at the camera, but the look is different.

MB: I did buy a small camera just to take my own pictures, but so far the most direct I've gotten is rephotographing my family's snapshots! What I'm trying to do with this new series—16 x 20" color prints in varying degrees of color filtered foggy— is formalize the idea of memory, to actually make images which can "picture" memory.

JE: You seem to propose that the direct experience of history and nature has been subsumed by our reliance on documentation and synthetic equivalents. And you said earlier that you thought even the memories of witnesses are selective. If both first- and second-hand experience are suspect, where does that leave us?

MB: I am emphasizing that direct experience of the real has been subsumed by synthetic equivalents, but I'm not critical of this state of affairs. I'm not saying this is necessarily a bad thing, but I am acutely aware of the dominance of mediated experience, mediated "fact." I am interested in how things take on meaning for us, whether that visual experience arrives in the form of film footage, TV news, nature calendars, travel brochures, pornography, or even the Simpson trial.

JE: How does the process of manipulating or transforming an image change the meaning of a photograph and allow us to see more in it?

MB: I don't think it's a matter of seeing more in the photograph. This implies a qualitative judgment about something missing in the original. My method is to use someone else's picture and make it into something different, but still respect the integrity of the initial image. I'm adding layers. It's all about context. The meanings shift because we shift. All one has to do is to look at the technology out there to see how easy it is to alter an image. Who controls the "truth" factor in pictures: the photographer, their subject, an editor, the computer? That issue is not interesting anymore for me. An important turning point was when I made "Untitled Family Piece," a work I did in '88. It was a break in that it made it really clear that the best form for me to work in was images, as opposed to paint. Paint before that had been my material, but I felt I wasn't articulate enough, wasn't being the painter I wanted to be.

JE: But it can be hard to give photography any personal touch. That's the problem with an es-



MARY BEHRENS, "UNTITLED FAMILY PIECE," 1988

entially mechanical process. I use photography, but for me it's important to have my hand intervene.

MB: I agree and I feel like that's what a lot of my work is, my own marks.

JE: "Untitled Family Piece" wasn't the first time you included photographs, yet with that work you broke with certain conventions of painting.

MB: That was the year my father died. A lot of things happened the year he died. I think I became a better artist after his death.

JE: I've always felt that one thing would happen if my parents weren't alive: I'd feel freedom to make the most crude and vile paintings, if I wanted to, and I wouldn't be judged by the ultimate judge.

MB: Well, I don't know if I would have done the "War" series if my father was still alive. What partly compelled me to this work was a search back to my father's history and a way of doing that was to claw through a history that was not directly mine.

JE: Two things are happening: one is that you're dealing with subject matter outside of your own experience, beyond your identity, and the other is this quest to connect with your ancestral past as a way of establishing an identity for yourself.

MB: Well, I know that the "War" series is linked with aspects of my own family identity, I'm just not sure exactly how. My father was an immigrant from Hitler's pre-war Germany. He got out in 1934 and moved to Canada, leaving my grandparents behind. My father wanted to but could not join the Allied forces because of a bad back. I grew up with a distinct taste for World War II stories. The aura of the war and all the horrors of it fascinated me. I was intrigued reading about people who had been wrenched from their normal lives and made to suffer in ways that were unimaginable to me. I adored Anne Frank. I don't want to sound glib but I really identified with her—in the way you latch on to heroes when you're young, when the exciting interesting things come to you via books or TV or movies because your own life is sort of dull and uneventful. My grandmother, who came to live with us for months at a time after my grandfather died, used to tell stories about the hardships of living through the war in Germany—the bombings, the food rations, the poverty, my grandfather being arrested for not returning a heil Hitler salute. I think all this left an impression on me, in a filtered down kind of way. So I guess that however much imagination you bring to your work, however "removed" you think you are from it, personal history makes a dent in the work somewhere. I mean, how can you completely get away from yourself? ■

James Esber lives in Brooklyn. His work has been shown at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts and recently at Bennington College. This fall he will have a one person show at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

Jonathan Blum

BY BARBARA SPINDEL

Jonathan Blum has spent the last two years painting the foreheads of rabbis, small and large, reverent and irreverent, unaccompanied or with some unexpected companions. He began in Israel with "The Original Rabbis" (1994), three nearly identical portraits with grounds of yellow, red, and blue. Inspired by his studies with a Hasidic rabbi in Jerusalem, the originals are spare, dignified, and serene. He looked at the work, saw it was powerful, and decided he had no reason to stop making them: "I like the idea of taking one subject and going far into it," he said. His approach has won him a moniker, "the forehead artist," for he is known in Provincetown and elsewhere for only concerning himself with the subject's face from the nose up, although he has recently broadened his focus and begun to paint mouths as well.

Despite his self-imposed limitation, Blum's rabbi portraits, exhibited last spring at the Bakker Gallery in Boston, express a wide range of emotion. "Rabbi in Red," the centerpiece of the show, with his long, white nose and his cheeks streaked with color, is almost clownlike, slightly humorous, but slightly sinister as well. This quality is altogether absent from "The Original Rabbis," which communicate a quiet and reflective devotion. Others, like the "Rabbi Lost in a Fictitious Landscape" (1996), have a cartoonish aspect that perhaps nod to Blum's previous obsession with Bert from *Sesame Street*, who is one of the unexpected companions alluded to above. In a woodcut entitled "Tolerance," the rabbi looks down while, at his side, Bert stares wide-eyed at the viewer.

There is a sadness to the best of these rabbis, at once poignant and unsettling. To me, this sad-



JONATHAN BLUM, "RABBI ON HIS WAY TO A FICTITIOUS LANDSCAPE"

ness is most affecting when Blum's rabbis appear before his mythical landscapes of clustered little houses with colorful roofs and spires. No longer can the viewer simply consider the visage of the prayerful Hasid in isolation. The landscape situates the rabbi in a world, albeit a dreamlike one, where the relationship between the rabbi and his surroundings must be accounted for. These paintings, and their titles, suggest a yearning, a lonely and unfulfilled search. Their longing resonates with historical conditions of Jewish exile and recalls European legends of the Wandering Jew, forced to roam the earth, endlessly and alone.

Amazingly, Blum brushes aside questions that connect the rabbis to his own Judaism, preferring to describe them as useful subjects through which to explore the possibilities of portraiture. My guess is that the artist, like his subjects, is searching for his own place within the religious tradition he was born into. ■

Barbara Spindel is a graduate student in American Studies at the University of Minnesota.



ARTHUR COHEN, "PROVINCETOWN HARBOR, 1988"

Arthur Cohen

BY BUNNY PEARLMAN

Arthur Cohen is 68 and has been painting for 35 years. Respected by painters, recipient of prestigious awards, he has not become fashionable in the manner of colleagues such as Wolf Kahn. His art, like the man, is eccentric, a separate genre. Yet he has managed to keep life and limb together, living quietly with his wife and family, painting every day. Lacking a university education and the associated rhetoric, he was reinforced in his alienation by his studies with Edwin Dickinson at the Art Students League. He saw he was an outsider both to the cult embracing abstract expressionism and to the illustrators of pop culture. I look closer and closer at the 40th painting of the wharf that he has otherwise painted several hundred times, and I am again caught in the magic, feeling or perceiving in his work the moment of stopping, rather than completion.

What about Cohen's painting puts him in the class of iconoclastic representational painters—Vermeer, van Gogh—painters who pursue their vision irrespective of art trends and fashion? What about his work is special? The answer may

be the ongoing process of each piece, the layers of paint washed and scraped away each day and begun again the following day, week, or year. Sometimes they sit for a long time before they are picked up again. The "ghost," as he explains it, is a hint, an indefinite image, that allows him to recreate from memory and imagination and then to return again to the spot where he started, but the light has changed, if only subtly, and it's another day and he has changed. His paintings are built of layers of paint representing layers of time and thought. Looking at a Cohen painting offers the experience of entering this time-space continuum. I feel myself being pulled into a deep space (composed of many thin layers) going back as far as the eye can see and then even more, to infinity, the way the universe continues to go on beyond where the eye can actually see. Though limited, the color in his work is important. He chooses a small range, mostly blues and grays and some pink or green. When he paints interiors, the colors are blacks, browns, and dark blues. The color is about the light. The pink is about the way the light is caught on the peak of the roof. It is not the color of the roof but the precise way the light is reflected on it. And then there is the part that one cannot put into words, except to say it is about mood and poetry, his love for the landscape and his family. His work captures, not the moment of perception (as in a photograph), but an ongoing moment to moment to moment to infinity, defying time, painting the forever, allowing us the belief that the moment will go on.

Bunny Pearlman: Tell me about your first serious painting.

Arthur Cohen: It was actually my fourth painting in 12 years, but it was my first real painting.

BP: What were the 12 years?

AC: Eighteen years old till 30.

BP: And what happened at 30 that allowed you to make that painting?

AC: You got me. It was a 12-inch painting of some things on a table and I worked on it for half a year. I was interested in Harnett then, a late 19th-century *trompe-l'oeil* painter, who painted objects falling out of the painting. It was 1958. I was living in the East Village and I showed it to a busy-body friend, a painter who lived in the same building. He was into the hip scene and was an "explainer," to borrow Gertrude Stein's term. He talked about Zen and I listened. He was envious of my little painting. He belonged to a group of 10th-rate action painters that hung out at the Cedar Bar and name dropped. He brought over a friend, another painter, Max Spoerri, who asked me, "Why do you paint this way?" I had one painting. They kept looking around for more. Finally they decided I was a "magic realist." I wanted to bring it to a gallery and they said, "You know, they'll want to see more work." It was amazing I didn't know, that I thought I could bring one painting to a gallery.

BP: Does it matter if you paint the wharf or an apple or your wife playing the piano?

AC: It's something to start on.

BP: So what matters?

AC: That's what I don't know—paint, if you will, or illumination, not sunlight necessarily.

BP: You start with a subject?

AC: I am looking at something. I draw with a brush—usually ruin it after 15 minutes or an hour. I can never decide to stop, like a child never wanting to go to bed.

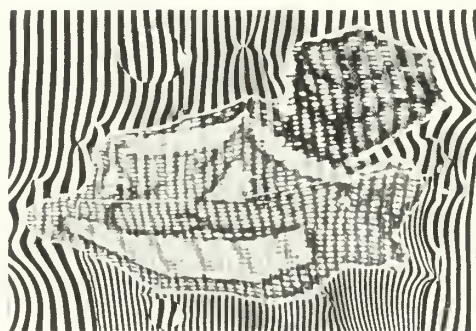
BP: Is there ever a moment of truth?

AC: Oh, yes. It comes and then it goes. It dissolves. It never does me any lasting good. Just when I think I've got hold of it, I wake up—like in a sexy dream, you wake before the end.

BP: So when do you decide the painting's finished?

AC: Not often. It's like your life. It's not up to you when it's finished. Balance is about living in the moment and looking just ahead and not back and not at one's feet, like a tightrope walker. ■

Bunny Pearlman, an artist, is director of the East End Gallery in Provincetown.



JAMES ESBER, HATE IMAGE #3 (INDIAN), 1993

The Hate Images of James Esber

BY MARY BEHRENS

While depicting an array of vicious stereotypes, James Esber paints in response to a world of borrowed images, images which have been processed, recycled, and manipulated by a mass media so omnipresent that traces of the so-called natural world have all but vanished from sight. An artist whose mission has been to pump up the volume on culturally prefab imagery, Esber re-manufactures the often embarrassing signs of society's racist, sexist, kitsch-ist propaganda. In the 1960s Andy Warhol took on the task of reconfiguring the banal into objects and paintings which demanded a closer look at consumerism as a necessary focus of fine art. Warhol's work was meaningfully empty and its apolitical nature forced the issue of locating beauty in the static currency of Coke bottles, Campbell's soup cans, Brillo boxes, Elvis, Marilyn, Jackie, and Liz. Though his lineage from pop art is clear, Esber,

in his *Hate Images* series, begun in Provincetown while on a fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center, is succinctly of the moment. Where Warhol took the neutered subject of a Coke bottle to reveal its worthy relationship to American culture, Esber borrows loaded stereotypes from which to deconstruct culture's troubling relationship with the distorted signs of a racist and sexist history and a society deeply confused by its own complicity.

Esber grew up in suburban Cleveland in the late '60s and was raised on *Life* magazine, television, and Swanson TV dinners. Like much of his generation, life-as-it-happens appeared for him via the remote-less television screen. The vitality that images contained, whether static or moving, left a lasting impression. Life revealed itself through the Benday dots of reproduced images or the pixelated break-down of the TV's mise-en-scene.

With the *Hate Images*, Esber creates a body of work intended to display the experience of the reproduced image, guided by the idea that stereotypes of Jews, African-Americans, women, Native Americans, and others depicted in the series, are first and foremost a distorted version of reality. What makes these paintings so powerful and beautiful is that Esber matches content with form so seamlessly and with such forcefulness that the idea becomes the work and vice versa. In a baroque manner, the images are magnified almost beyond recognition and the artifice of the paintings' surfaces is cranked up. In recent pieces, Esber even stretches and distorts the painting's support, the canvas itself becoming a spectacle of distended material, a further metonym for an image's distorted facts. Esber's work reflects a disquieting reproduction of culture's more vile legacy—blown-up images of fear, hatred, and contempt. ■

Mary Behrens is a visual artist who was a fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in 1992. She will exhibit her work in July at the DNA Gallery in Provincetown.

John Grillo: The San Francisco Years

BY SUSAN LANDAUER

When John Grillo rolled up his canvases, packed his suitcases, and caught a bus to San Francisco more than 40 years ago, he could scarcely have foreseen the impact his brief stay in that city would make. In 1946 and 1947 he played a seminal role in the San Francisco branch of the movement that would revolutionize American art. Today he is acknowledged as the first and purest "action painter" on the West Coast. That Grillo's efforts paralleled, and in some cases anticipated, vanguard developments in the East is demonstrated by the works that will hang in an exhibition this summer at the Cove Gallery in Wellfleet.

At the close of the war, Grillo was one of the first veterans to arrive at the California School of Fine Arts. The director, Douglas MacAgy, a man with rare foresight and sophistication, engaged the most progressive painters available. Among the teachers he hired were Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, and Stanley William Hayter from the East, and Clyfford Still, Richard Diebenkorn, Hassel Smith, and Edward Corbett from the West. John Hultberg, a student at the time, remembers watching Grillo paint: "He'd stand back about three feet and throw paint at the canvas, let it drip, and turn it over. They'd never heard of that in New York."



JOHN GRILLO, "BLACK GHOST," 1946

During this period Grillo executed some impressive oils, but he reserved his most radical experimentation for the medium of watercolor. He produced a series in poster paint which, for sheer inventiveness of technique, rivaled stylistic advances on the opposite coast. In their spontaneity and dramatic intensity, many of these paintings bear the hallmarks of classic abstract expressionism as it would be practiced in New York by Kline and de Kooning. What is remarkable is that Grillo had no knowledge of these artists, and neither one had yet had a one-person exhibition. Anyone tempted to find Grillo's source of inspiration in Pollock should remember that Pollock was at this time only beginning the drip technique that would later make him famous.

Most of the shapes in Grillo's works draw on an abstract vocabulary of circles, ellipses, and crescent forms, but unlike Miró in his "Constellations," for example, Grillo shows a reluctance to freeze shapes with static contours. Edges are blurred, the paint is allowed to drip and run in intuitive meanderings, and the forms are powerful and dramatic. The boldest of his watercolors are those in which Grillo has left his surrealist roots behind, and has fulfilled his stated objective of the time, to "develop original work without any influences other than self-express-

sion." There is no vestige of exterior reality and no discernable figure-ground relationship. Instead the work is purely two-dimensional, and forms are emphatically flat. The surface is animated in a variety of ways, ranging from broad gestures to streaked and splattered paint. Here, Grillo's choice of poster paint serves to advantage, lending its liquid medium and fast drying properties to the immediacy he sought. The paintings have none of the violence and anguish of Pollock and none of the profound mystery of Rothko. Instead they exude a delight in the manipulation of paint with colors that are radiant, in some cases phosphorescent. The frequent appearance of turquoise and bright yellow suggest the tropical water and sun-drenched regions of the South Seas, where Grillo was stationed during the war. Above all, there is wit and humor, a *joie de vivre* that distinguishes his work from the weighty seriousness of the New York School. In the summer of 1947, Grillo left for the East Coast to study with Hans Hofmann in New York and Provincetown, choosing this course upon discovering that the older artist's love of dazzling color bore an uncanny resemblance to his own, even though Grillo had never before seen Hofmann's work. ■

Susan Landauer is completing a dissertation at Yale University on the San Francisco school of abstract expressionism.

Mary Hackett

BY KEITH ALTHAUS

An exhibition opening September 22 at the Cape Museum of Fine Arts in Dennis will cover more than five decades of work by this self-taught Provincetown artist. Mary Hackett began drawing in the early 1930s, when she was 23 or 24, avoiding taking any lessons, seeing even then "it was really very good." She continued drawing exclusively for several years before taking up painting. Some of these first drawings are included in the show, as well as dozens of paintings, made from the mid-'30s through the '80s. They do not form a clear progression or development although her first paintings employ a cruder line than her later work. Throughout drawing was an important component of her painting. The '40s through the '60s were perhaps the peak of her technical achievement, her style becoming looser and freer afterward. The thread of her quirky intelligence and sincere striving runs throughout her work. While she always attempted faithful representations of what she saw, it pleased her that her results often turned out quite differently. She remarks with pleasure and surprise, in an interview with Jay Critchley in 1983, how a painting of the view down her street to the bay has the road turning the wrong way. As she gained more technical expertise the results were more literal, and to her, less admirable. This may have contributed to her later, looser, and more spacious style.



MARY HACKETT, "VIEW FROM INTERIOR OF PEUGEOT AUTO IN PARIS LOOKING OUT AT THE SEINE, 1961, WITH M.H. IN PROCESS OF TRYING TO PAINT A SAINT RATHER THAN A SCENE"

Let us look at one work, "View from Interior of Peugeot Auto in Paris Looking out at the Seine, 1961, with M.H. in Process of Trying to Paint a Saint Rather than the Scene." This painting, with its characteristically wry and useful title, contains many of the best features of Mary Hackett's work: her subdued palette, "the colors of Indian corn"; her telescoping of great and small, down to the tiniest detail, like the serial numbers on the key; her unique perspective and oblique approach, as here, from the back seat of a car (she loved cars, I'm sure partly because they represented freedom), where the artist is beginning to paint a religious picture; the drawing, boldly inventive, with loving details, which as in many paintings are rendered in that half-drawing, half-painting style she created to satisfy her desire for both clarity and atmosphere.

What an odd painting this is, a strange comment on the everyday and the spiritual. A painting one could ostensibly do anywhere, yet here we are in Paris on a beautiful day, warm enough to have the sunroof open, looking out on a scene where the natural and manmade compliment each other's beauty, even as the artist expresses other concerns. For such seemingly open and uncalculated paintings, Mary Hackett's have an uncanny way (I say this because it is only after seeing these qualities crop up again and again that we become aware of them) of conjuring second meanings, often references to her own spiritual quest, verifying the impossibility of keeping the artist's life and concerns out of even the most seemingly unrelated subjects.

Always straightforward, even blunt, her title tells us the work is about "painting a saint not the scene." Uniting by the unusual device of the frame of the car, she shows us the panorama through the windshield, including the view through the sunroof and a miniature self-portrait in the rearview mirror, like a Renaissance aside. We see the 19th-century houses along the quay, the barges and water, sky of the same color, and the incomplete painting, just begun yet already clearly defined as a saint by the lines of the halo.

In an essay, Elizabeth Bishop points out differences between self-taught writers and self-taught artists. Barring a few diaries and journals of great interest, most self-taught writers fall back upon clichés, starting and ending with vague, strong feelings, apparently satisfied to simply name them, with none of the richness, intense detail, and clear fascination with their subjects which characterizes the self-taught artists who have made serious contributions to our culture. One feels as long as the subject holds the artist enthralled, the painting may succeed; and so often the self-taught artist is drawn to a subject for personal or non-traditional reasons, which lie on a wholly different plane than plastic concerns.

The day approaches when Mary Hackett will take her place in the pantheon of American artists, a recognition scarcely sought, and hardly imaginable in her lifetime. Why she will be recognized is itself interesting. She fills no particular niche in the narrative of art history, her work advances no movement and exemplifies no theory. It is simply so perfect and complete in its vision as to become powerfully magnetic. When one invokes the term "visionary" it usually conjures up and implies great scenes of momentous scale, or else dim glimpses into hidden worlds, portending great mysteries. But vision can be on any scale, as long as it has a uniqueness that is valid, without fabrication. Yet truth itself is no help. Many a truthful story can be unbearably boring. Art revolves around a kind of truth which need not extend beyond its borders. Its sense of rightness is largely self-defined.

Some artists are acutely aware of their status, constantly monitoring the critical atmosphere. Others are only half-interested, perhaps feigning disinterest or a disapproval of aggressive competition, often a result of early rebuffs. Either way their egos are highly involved in their work. Finally there are some who are genuinely disinterested, having themselves formed no real theory or opinion about their work, doing it only as they are moved to do it.

How internal Mary Hackett's paintings feel, how essentially interior they are (perhaps a reason she so often gravitated toward the literal "interiors" and why they may be her best work). They do not refer us to their literal subjects. They are so self-contained and spiritually complete. They have a kind of energy which never leaks out. Even the simplest are deepening mysteries, which never wear out nor are completely discovered.

There is a kind of fusion created when an artist, troubled or excited within, attempts to lose all self in faithful execution of the external, the product of which is really neither internal nor external, but occupies a new place, both solid and illusory, like a hologram. It is certainly wrong to speak of these paintings in terms of hallucination, yet they bear some kinship to that experience of reality which exactly duplicates this one, yet claims to be more real. Her paintings evoke the mystery of the ordinary. We are aware

of the miraculous in what is nearest, close as breath and pulse. ■

Keith Althaus is the author of a collection of poems, Rival Heavens, published by Provincetown Arts Press in 1993.



NOA HALL, "SHADOWS V"

Noa Hall

BY JOANNE SILVER

Early on, it was the ocean-borne light off Wellfleet that held Noa Hall in its sway. Then, when her family moved to the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, she discovered a different kind of luminous mist, drowsier, warmer. The locations have shifted over the years—from the shadows of Asian banyan trees to the pollen on nearby Horseleech Pond—but Hall's gaze has remained steadily fixed on light and its myriad effects. Out of nature's most changeable feature she has crafted luxuriant paintings that preserve evanescence and give structure to elusiveness. Her art celebrates moments that pass quickly before the eye but linger in the memory.

Somewhere, not far from the scenes Hall paints, is a world filled with solid forms. Trees and houses, people and cars inhabit this universe, their shapes creating a visual cacophony. Hall stays one step removed from the clutter. She prefers to focus on shadows, not substance, and on the play of light and atmosphere, not the artifacts of nature and humans. Sitting in a café in Cambridge, Massachusetts, not far from her art-filled home, she pauses as she considers what she paints. "What I try to do is to take the excitement, the response to the very specific and translate that into an essence," she says. "Through the specific, I try to get to the universal. It should be able to be any pond."

Luminous, dappled, smoky, billowing—the shadows and reflections Hall paints vary from place to place, season to season, pond to pond, tree to tree. Even a single tree, such as the exotic banyan with its multiple trunks, can produce a range of effects in different paintings. Against an ochre ground, its shadow looms sternly. Elsewhere the shadow melts with fluid ease into the radiant earth. The shade of a tree from tropical

Captiva appears weightless in one view, moist in another, as it spreads a skein of branches across the sunbaked sand.

"I think you absorb things about a place," Hall says, adding that the Cape light definitely had a bearing on her becoming a painter. "Light has always been what motivates my making a painting. I would get excited about the shadow, the light hitting a model's face, the light hitting a roof. Exploring the shadowy part is a big part of exploring life itself."

Hall's shadows reveal much about what is not in the picture. Crisp lines suggest the bright light of a clear afternoon. "Fiery Shadows," with its atmospheric layers of flaming color, is all vapor and smoky curls, reminiscent of the works of J.M.W. Turner. The haziness cloaks the scene in the mystery of something half-remembered. By concentrating on shadows, often of trees, Hall invites the viewer to notice the subtle variations in what might at first seem constant. A frequent image shows a dark trunk and branches spilling from left to right. The shifts come in more ephemeral qualities: time of day or year, weather, mood. The exercise recalls Monet—who observed Rouen Cathedral in a panoply of lights—but also contemporary artists.

Despite their lush, almost romantic sensibility, Hall's paintings hint of minimalism in their sparseness and serial unfolding. Their iridescent beauty appeals conceptually as well as visually. Ultimately the shadows—insubstantial stand-ins for real objects—are the perfect vehicle for paint. Just as the darkened silhouettes and watery reflections mimic the forms that cast them, Hall's daubs of oil paint imitate the seen world. And, like the shadows, the paint takes on a shimmering existence, its taffeta colors no longer tied to the universe beyond the frame. ■

Joanne Silver is senior arts writer for the Boston Herald.

Lester Johnson: In New York and P-town

BY BURT CERNOW

A Provincetown of the past is in Lester Johnson's blood and in the paint that drips from his brush. "I really loved the place," he said. Beginning in 1954, for a string of formative summers, Provincetown's dunes, water, light and the joie de vivre of restless emerging artists helped shape his unique vision. By the time Johnson arrived in the celebrated art colony, he had learned to trust his intellectual intuition and the natural physicality of painting. Yes, artists like Milton Avery, Adolph Gottlieb and Robert Motherwell roamed this small, idyllic outpost, but what attracted Johnson and other artists was the place and its spirit. The art classes of Hans Hofmann, teacher extraordinaire, offered an added attraction. Art critic Irving Sandler, who washed dishes during the early '50s in P-town, quietly slipped

into Hofmann's Friday critiques, since "everybody knew that Hofmann was the best teacher anywhere (and they were right)." Hofmann had a way of convincing students that they could and should succeed his generation as the vanguard of a new fraternity of vital artists.

Born to a large Lutheran family in Minneapolis in 1919, Johnson studied at the Minneapolis School of Art, the St. Paul Art School, and later at the Chicago Art Institute. He was introduced to Hofmann's teaching approach, particularly the "push and pull" effects of form and color by St. Paul teachers Alexander Masley and Cameron Booth, both of whom had studied with Hofmann in Munich. In 1947 Johnson moved to New York and became one of the first downtown loft-dwellers. He shared a lower East Side studio with Larry Rivers and attended some of Hofmann's New York classes. Rents were cheap but Johnson was broke much of the time as he tried to support his painting through a variety of part-time jobs, including teaching art. In 1950, he and Philip Pearlstein shared a studio space; Lester's wife, Jo, had introduced the two artists at a time when she and Pearlstein were studying art history at New York University. Johnson's various studios, on the Bowery and elsewhere, were always one flight up with a view of Manhattan's active street life. No wonder, for almost 50 years now, street scenes have been a dominant part of his art.

During the early 1950s, Johnson became associated with the Hansa Gallery Group, the 10th Street Co-op Movement, and had his first one-man show at Artists Gallery. Johnson became a member of the famous 8th Street "Club" which met weekly. There, at the Cedar Bar, and at openings he became acquainted with artists who were to play historic roles in Irving Sandler's classic



LESTER JOHNSON, "BOWERY SILHOUETTES," 1963

drips, the gestures—it was so beautiful and everybody loved them but they were empty. I was into human content so I used it, and I found it a very, very exciting thing to do. I did a lot of paintings at the time where you can hardly see the figure, but it's there."

Johnson adopted the working techniques of action painting. He used a great deal of paint. A tube of oil paint might be expended in seconds as he, like Pollock, physically projected himself into the work. The images that Johnson produced were not decorative, but stubbornly confrontational: oversize, brooding, thickly encrusted, scarred surfaces that were alive with recognizable objects and figures. Even today, few realize how difficult Johnson's choice of subject was in an adamantly pro-abstract art climate. Sculptor George Segal recalled, "The Abstract Expressionists were legislating any reference to the physical world totally out of art. This was outrageous to us." Rebellion came naturally to Lester Johnson. He would tenaciously remain outside the mainstream. Nonetheless, he produced a body of work that influenced several generations of younger painters and confounded an art establishment in need of neat categorization. The most common phrase used to describe Johnson: "One of the most respected and influential second-generation Abstract Expressionists." Indeed, he remains so. In fact, it is hard to find a serious painter of any persuasion who does not respect and follow the remarkable evolution of Johnson's art. He is one of the few painters whose work holds significance for both abstract and figurative artists.

In 1954 Johnson hitchhiked to Provincetown. He described the experience in an exhibition catalog, "The Sun Gallery," published by the Provincetown Art Association and Museum in 1981: "I found a place and Jo came up afterward. There were many spaces that had been converted into beautiful studios close to town. One summer I worked at Pablo's, a Spanish restaurant. I painted all day and washed dishes at night. Another summer, Mary Oliver hired me as a bartender for her restaurant/inn. Jimmy Simmons, a poet, gave me my first job. He had this unique little restaurant, The House of Art. It was self-service. People came in, made their own orange juice, toast or hamburger, then they had to figure out what they owed. There was a bucket hanging where you left money. People were honest. Simmons would go off and leave me there; I organized things, directed traffic and

cleaned up. At night there were poetry readings. That's where I met Dominic Falcone and Yvonne Anderson. They were interested in my work." The next summer, Johnson had his first of five exhibitions and became the only artist to show annually at the Sun Gallery, 393 Commercial Street in Provincetown. The space, founded by Falcone and Anderson and devoted to "new voices," debuted in 1955, lasted five summers then disappeared into P-town folklore. Anderson and Falcone supported the operation on meager salaries and with youthful enthusiasm. Anderson recalled, "Shows closed on midnight Sunday. We drew our orange curtains until the opening of the next show—nine o'clock on Monday night. The artist or artists would paint their names on the window before the opening—by then people would be crowding the street waiting for the moment when the curtains would open."

Paint dripped freely down the glass from Lester Johnson's signature each summer the Sun Gallery survived. "A town crier announced the exhibitions," he said. "I remember Hans Hofmann came to some of my openings. Dom and Yvonne had good-natured arguments with him because he worked abstractly." Other figurative artists who showed at the avant-garde space included: Red Grooms, Mary and Robert Frank, Alex Katz, Allan Kaprow, Marcia Marcus, Dody and Jan Müller, Lucas Samaras, Bob Thompson, Jay Milder, and Tony Vevers. Most of these young artists had studied with Hofmann and shared an unease with the perceived orthodoxy of abstract painting.

By the mid-'50s, Johnson's resolute commitment to the figure and forceful imagery announced a decisive breakthrough, setting an example for attentive young painters. Several important art critics noticed. James R. Mellow said, "Johnson has made himself one of the masters of contemporary figure painting, in a style that is unequivocally his own." Harold Rosenberg agreed, "Lester Johnson has drawn a mysterious, unpredictable and moving image. One could not have arrived at this image through analyzing society or through analyzing painting. It was brought into being by the act of painting itself, and it could emerge only as painting."

Johnson would enlarge the scope of abstract expressionism, going beyond de Kooning's "Women" and Pollock's late black-and-white figurative imagery. Stanislavski's comment, "There are no accidents in art, only the fruits of long labor," is applicable to Johnson's work. As an action painter he learned to exploit accidental events, developing an approach that was neither preconceived nor arbitrary. Freedom of action and spontaneity encounter self-imposed artistic conditions that focus Johnson's aesthetic energies. His world is one in which freedom and structure, action and limitations are essential and interdependent.

"I have no interest in balance, because balance is static," Johnson says. "It is the dynamic quality of life that I try to reflect in my paint-



LESTER JOHNSON (RIGHT) WITH WILLEM DE KOONING
PHOTO BY DOROTHY BESKIND

book of the period, *The Triumph of American Painting*. At the Club, an exchange of ideas often turned heated. Johnson became a target for dogmatically abstract painters because of his persistently figurative work. "You're a good painter," they would admit, "too bad you're on the wrong side of the fence." Johnson called to mind his long experience with action painting, a format associated with non-figurative abstract expressionism in its heyday. In an interview in 1988 he said, "I thought it very quickly became a cliché, . . . it was too easy, they could make the

ings." Not simply movement, but the nature force, the continuum that interested Pollock, Tobey, and others in the New York School, is articulated as figure painting. Johnson's paintings clearly go beyond the non-continuous works of de Kooning, who despite his other departures, maintains the traditional isolation of the figure within his compositions. Lester Johnson's motif of the human figure is for him what the square was for Josef Albers. His images may take the form of archetypes or individuals, but they are variations on the structural theme—the human object. These figures defy the familiar rules, optical facts are forgotten in order to examine psychological realities, two images can occupy a space, structure is dictated by the internal necessities of the work, and an aesthetic unity is forged from multiple contradictions.

In 1960 and 1962 Johnson showed at Provincetown's HCE Gallery; it would be 34 years before another three-letter enterprise—the UFO Gallery—mounted another Johnson exhibition on the Cape, opening July 19th this summer. Johnson reminisced, "The Provincetown scene was all music, writing, and painting. Jo and I wanted to build a summer place there but when we had a child it was out of the question." The Johnsons eventually built a summer home in East Hampton where Lester worked and developed friendships with de Kooning, Rosenberg, and others. "Provincetown would have been more fun," Johnson said. "It was much more of an artists' community than East Hampton. People were always walking on the street at night. It was very social. In East Hampton there were parties but only by invitation, a completely different spirit."

By the time op and pop art burst upon the scene in the early 1960s, Johnson had developed a solid reputation with five successful exhibitions at New York's Zabriskie Gallery. In 1964, a teaching position at Yale University brought Lester, Jo, their daughter, Leslie, and son, Tony, from New York to a spacious home and studio in Connecticut. In teaching figure drawing, Johnson did everything possible to shake up preconceived notions. He had students draw while approximating the model's pose, sometimes actually jostling them as they worked at their easels. "I tried to make them realize that painting is a physical act," he said.

That physicality is evident in most of Johnson's art. His 1996 exhibition at UFO Gallery not only includes a cross-section of drawings and paintings from different periods, but a striking portfolio of six early woodcut prints titled "Man in Woodcut, 1953-1957," done when Provincetown provided nourishing summer escapes from New York. We see the roots of the artist's iconography in these powerful graphic images. The directness and sheer physicality of the medium no doubt had great appeal for him. Compelling heads emerge, activated figures struggle for concrete form within a dense calligraphic field. From the earliest dark and somber

works, like "Bowery Silhouettes," through his light-drenched, more recent canvases, Johnson continues to take considerable risk while rejecting formulas.

"Street Scene with Four Men" is packed with action and counter-action, pushing and pulling that oscillate on a flattened picture plane. There is a freedom from intellectual constraint as parts of the body are seen in motion, interchangeable and impossible. In this work, as with others, the persuasive images transcend the everyday events which inspire them. There is an atmosphere of willing submission in each participant's frenzied struggle to accomplish nothing at all. The men go through the empty gestures of modern life in close proximity to each other, passing but never really communicating. The painting is simultaneously representational and non-objective, and at least as much meaning can be drawn from the abstract structure as from the literal content.

"City Scene" presents another panorama of people, the least restrained of whom are Johnson's explosively physical women. Exuberant color and strenuous gestures are typical of the voluptuous women who bring a heightened energy to much of the work of the past two decades. Varied, strongly patterned fabrics have given the artist another vehicle for his color, which is now more assertive than at any point in his development. "City Scene" has its own momentum, which does not allow us to rest with any particular detail. Instead, we are drawn into an hypnotic, syncopated dance of life.

Never has Lester Johnson looked so much like an old master as in the inescapable contrast of his work to the vehement painting of "neo-expressionists" like David Salle and Julian Schnabel. Clearly, Johnson was not only decades ahead of his time, but also in a class of his own. Since his first exhibition in 1951, his work stands as a precursor of much that has become a central concern in today's art scene. The focus of his late paintings continues to be the urban crowd in its kaleidoscopic intensity. Men and women move with the collective bustle of the city in an enigmatic, contemporary drama of epic proportion. There are no heroes or villains, no good or evil, in this agitated and strangely familiar world. It is possible for even the most resistant viewer to somehow join the cast of characters and become part of the narrative in the artist's grand parade. Lester Johnson's animated men and women, with all their nervous energy, yield themselves only gradually to analysis and will no doubt be reinterpreted for many years to come. His largest achievement is perhaps the degree to which each of his works is still able to convince us that the act of painting is relevant and vital. ■

Burt Chernow is the author of Lester Johnson: The Kaleidoscopic Crowd, and 12 other books on art. He is a member of the International Art Critics Association and is Director Emeritus of the Housatonic Museum of Art. He is currently writing an authorized biography of Christo and Jeanne-Claude.



CHET JONES, "FISH SHACK AND HIGHLAND LIGHT"

Chet Jones

BY MARY SHERMAN

Chet Jones has lived and worked in Provincetown for the past three years. In that brief span of time, he has had three sold-out solo shows, most recently at Gallery 349. In September, he will show there again and he will have work on exhibit this summer at the National Academy of Design in New York. I first met Chet in the late '70s at Boston College, where we were both studying studio art.

Mary Sherman: Twenty years ago you were painting figures. Are you still painting them?

Chet Jones: I'm still drawing figures. I've found that keeping up with live model drawing skills helps the process of translating ideas into visual reality. There's a certain eye-hand coordination that I think is important. Painting the figure is something I'm thinking of returning to. There's no hierarchy of subject for me. Anything can be the means of saying what you have to say.

MS: Sometime along the way, you switched to landscapes. And now your newest paintings deal almost exclusively with the image of a house façade, a gabled structure, or some other architectural element. Is there a reason for this?

CJ: The house façade came out of a need to simplify the landscape elements to their barest forms. I was interested in taking a view of things that was as clear and concise as a manuscript well-edited to make a more forceful expression. The idea for this came out of looking at the light on the buildings in Provincetown, especially the fish shacks. The stark contrast of gabled structures against the sea and sky was, for me, a way of seeing something in my paintings that wasn't clearly expressed before. It was a discovery helped by the physical surroundings of Provincetown, much like the Italian landscapes when I visited in the '80s, where the atmospheric perspective was so obvious I was surprised that it took so long for the Italians to discover it.

MS: You say there was something that appeared in your paintings that wasn't expressed before. Could you explain what you mean?

CJ: In the previous landscape paintings, I was looking at a scene that had many, many elements in it, including a house. I always painted what I saw in front of me, and that disturbed me because it didn't seem quite coherent. I thought it was just because I was an unskilled landscape painter. Then I realized that how I interpret what I am looking at comes first. The painting is not about the landscape. The landscape is a springboard for what I find visually fascinating. So once I realized that I had that control and freedom, landscape painting made sense. It liberated me both intellectually and emotionally.

MS: So how did that bring that new-found information to the structures you are working with now?

CJ: Provincetown's typical architecture made that point for me. It is nothing but buildings, sky, and sea. It gave me a visual shock, and my thinking became clearer. The simplification of subject gave me the way of dividing the canvas in terms of line, color, and shadow. I saw how to take what was in front of me and conceptualize it as a distilled impression that also incorporated my own emotional outlook.

MS: Your move to Provincetown in 1993 seemed to have a great effect on you. Not only did it crystallize some of the painterly issues you were facing, but it also provided you with a market for your work and seemed to have brought more of your personality to the fore. Would you say that is correct?

CJ: I never came to Provincetown for the market. What attracted me was the kind of community that it represented: the gay and lesbian community, the community of renowned artists that live in Provincetown and its connection to the New York art scene, a fact that is totally out of scale with its small size. It is a small town with a cosmopolitan outlook and a beautiful landscape. I feel at home. ■

Mary Sherman teaches at Boston College and writes art reviews for the Boston Herald.

Portia Munson: A Beautiful Suffocation

BY PAMELA MANDELL

I met Portia Munson in 1993, when she was a fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center. I remember her concerns about being pregnant with her first baby and preparing for her first solo exhibition at the Yoshii Gallery in New York. This spring, three years later, Munson and I are sitting by the window in a café on 57th street, several doors down from the Yoshii Gallery. It's the day after the opening of her most recent exhibition, and she is tired. Astonishingly, she admits, she has been more productive since her son Zur

was born two years ago. Zur not only accompanied his mother around the East Coast as she gave slide talks and lectures but also traveled to Finland, along with Munson's husband, Jared Handelsman, a sculptor, where she participated in a group exhibition at the Finnish National Gallery.

Munson describes her current exhibition, "The Garden," as "a bunny/flower fertility shrine, a place where I like to imagine a giant bunny-lady lives." At the opening, Zur, an active, curly-headed toddler, tugged at Munson's long black skirt decorated with pink and blue daisies. Although I had seen two earlier versions of "The Garden"—one last fall at Berta Walker's West Window in Provincetown and one in the studio of Munson's small apartment on the Bowery—I was not quite prepared for the densely packed space of the gallery.

A canopy, made up of polyester flower dresses sewn together, is the top-most focal point of the bunny-and-flower kitsch-filled room. When I look up, I feel like a bee negotiating the nectar-filled hollow of a giant daffodil. At its center-most point, where the dresses are stretched and sewn neatly together, light leaks through. Though it is only a gallery light, I like to imagine the sky. Otherwise, the room is dark, lit only by small, low-wattage lamps, one with a lampshade decorated with sunny pink, yellow, and blue plastic flowers. There are two windows, with flowered curtains, but they are not real windows looking out onto the world, rather they are covered over with more flowered fabric, heightening the already powerful sense of an imploding, rabbit-filled garden.

The room abounds with plastic, paper, and silk flowers, and hundreds of flowered and

turned to face a mirror which is propped up by a flowered chair. The video, made from edited clips, shows the sexual life of flowers—flowers seen in slow motion, opening, pushing their pistils upward or sensually rising up out of the ground—and the mating habits of boxing hares.

I walk up to the table, to more closely examine the tchotchkes: a pink trash can with "Cathy's Room" printed on it, a flower-covered tissue box, flower pins, bunny candles, bunny brush, bunny slippers, a flowered-fabric book entitled *A New Awakening*, a hanging plastic flower basket, a pink plastic mirror eerily emanating a song, evidently from *Snow White*. On one of the shelves to the right of the table and to the left of a vanity—also covered with objects—are "Breast Bells." These are white, glazed ceramic cones, crowned with rosy flesh-colored nipples which one can, presumably, grab hold of in order to shake the bells inside. The bells are pieces Munson made several years ago, and along with five of her oil paintings, the only previously existing works to be included in the exhibition. Everything else, every stuffed animal and object, was found at thrift shops, yard sales, and the swap shop at the dump. Many of the items, such as the lamps, bunny rugs, and a plastic flower-covered bunny statue, are objects made from these cast-off materials specifically for "The Garden."

The paintings in the exhibition contain subject matter consistent with Munson's penchant for making the ordinary, particularly the ordinary details of women's lives, seem ironic and even menacing. I recall her menstrual prints (not included in this exhibition), which are slightly shocking, queasy, brownish-red Rorschachs on white paper made during the artist's own menstrual cycle. In one of the paintings, "Purse," a



PORTIA MUNSON
"THE GARDEN," 1996
INSTALLATION,
YOSHII GALLERY,
NEW YORK

bunnied objects cover tables, shelves, and a vanity. The walls are decorated with more flowered dresses, one has plastic flower-shaped rattles hanging down as breasts, and a flower painting (painstakingly executed by an amateur) hangs above a bed crammed and overflowing with hundreds of stuffed bunnies. The floor is partially covered with throw rugs—skinned stuffed bunnies sewn together—which I mince over, afraid to smash their innocent noses. In the corner, a video can be seen in the reflection of a TV

shiny red purse with a gold clasp yawns open, revealing a dark red interior. "Valentine" depicts a big, red, shiny valentine box, which seems to have held, at one time, dark chocolate candy; its satin suggests, both with humor and melancholy, the rumpled sheets of lovers. "Flowers with Nipples," two baby nipples set against a flowered background, brings a fresh and funny perspective to the act of breast-feeding.

As I watch the flower/hare video, I overhear Munson talking to a journalist for a prominent art magazine. She is telling the writer that while creating the installation, her grandmother passed away and when a man observing the work-in-progress remarked, "My god, this looks like a funeral," she says she realized she *had* made a funerary altar of sorts. I push my way over to the sidelines and sit on a bench. A friend sitting next to me comments: "I guess this is what goes on underneath a dress." Both these observations call up the image of Kali: the devouring, all-consuming Hindu goddess of sex and death to whom worshippers make offerings. In this room, I imagine Kali as a giant bunny-lady with a terrific hunger for the nostalgic remnants of other people's lives.

In *Pink Project*, an installation Munson created for the *Bad Girls* exhibition at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, hundreds of pink objects, from pink dildos to pink hair clips, were laid-out on a 7- by 14-foot table. In this installation, for which Munson received national and international attention, the sheer number of pink items—along with the careful arrangement juxtaposing girlish items, like a pink doll, with a sex toy, such as a pink vibrator, or a pink squeaky-dog toy with a pink toilet brush—highlighted the ways in which our culture has defined, objectified, and marketed the idea of femininity. In "The Garden" she has built on this idea and on the complex nature of sexuality. Inside the room, which is both fascinating and claustrophobic, a viewer must not only observe, but more importantly, confront, the celebratory, humorous, and overwhelming aspects of fertility and motherhood. Before the opening, Munson remarked, "I feel an empathy with these objects, I think of them as emotions or conditions." For the viewer who enters "The Garden," this empathy, as expressed through Munson's persistent vision and hard work, results in a visual encounter which is provocative and infectious.

The next day, at the café, Munson says she "was interested in making something so beautiful that it becomes extremely suffocating." Fresh from the experience and having watched viewers carefully navigate the bursting, blooming room, I have to admit she's really done it this time. She sips her mocha and though worn out from all her efforts—particularly the final eight days it took to install the exhibition—she maintains a hazy zeal. The excited buzz from the night before still hangs in the air. "Look," she says, pointing to a woman standing on the sidewalk outside the window. "Look at her shoes!" The woman, petite and middle-aged, is wearing a red dress and pink lacy socks with red high heels. Still under the spell of "The Garden," I am struck by the absurd and hilarious notion that the woman's feet look like little spring flowers. ■

Pamela Mandell's interview with the artist Jenny Humphreys appears elsewhere in this issue.



LEE MUSSELMAN, PHOTO ROSS BENNETT LEWIS

Lee Musselman

BY PHILIP GAMBONE

"MY FIRST DILEMMA IN LIFE was not being able to have a Barbie doll," says Lee Musselman.

It's a beautiful, early-spring morning, the kind that seems to promise the end of winter's grip. I've come to Musselman's apartment/studio in the East End of Provincetown to talk with him about his life and work and to see his latest project, a series of large, free-standing, quilted dolls, on view at the Berta Walker Gallery this season. His quip about the Barbie dolls, which comes about a half hour into our conversation, sets me to laughing uproariously, and I realize that we've finally arrived at that point when both the interviewer and the interviewee have relaxed enough to take some risks. It's an utterance that conveys not only the humor and facetiousness of his gay male sensibility but the trauma and inconsolable pain of an unhappy childhood. This conjunction of adult and childhood experience, of gay aesthetic and primal wound, is at the heart of much of the work that Musselman has shown me this morning—a conjunction not unlike that of spring and winter, Persephone and Hades.

Each of Musselman's dolls, some of them standing five or six feet tall, begins as a vintage '40s or '50s doll's head grafted onto a wooden skeleton. Over this frame, which Musselman either builds from scratch or adapts from a small piece of furniture, he wraps cotton batting and other material until he achieves the desired bulk for the body, arms, and legs. Next he "dresses" the doll, covering it with scraps of salvaged fabric quilted together. Finally, the entire costume—which looks like a midwestern farm wife's version of a harlequin suit—is adorned with hundreds of safety pins, creating what to me felt like a homey, sequined effect, but which, Musselman observes in another humorous/painful conjunction, he calls "the ultimate body piercing." Musselman, who has made several series of dolls over the years, dubs his latest creations "Adult Children."

When I suggest to him that the stance of his most recent Adult Child doll seems centaur-like, he says, "Well, I *am* a Sagittarius." Then he adds,

"I wanted her to stand strong. I had to work out her equilibrium, her armature, her skeleton, so that she wouldn't break three years from now."

The artist, who turns 40 this year ("I want a big party at Disney World!"), still speaks with the gentle lilt of his midwestern upbringing, in a musical, tenor-range *tessitura* that, at humorous moments, is punctuated with a high, flutey laugh. His head is shaved, his body doughy and Buddha-like. Before our meeting this morning, he has already been scouting out pre-season yard sales in town. But the dump, he says, is the best source of new material for his dolls and other assemblages.

"I'm out there probably three or four times a week. In the winter, in the rain—it doesn't matter." Friends let him know of still other potential sources for the detritus that he turns into art. He says he prefers to use dolls' heads from the '40s and '50s because they're more lifelike. "Plastic doesn't breathe," he explains. "And dolls from that era are more or less the same age as I."

There is a conjunction of the childlike and the haunting in the look of Musselman's apartment, which, until very recently when he began renting additional studio space in a garage, doubled as his only work area. Toys, sculptures, wall hangings, paintings are piled, hung, arranged everywhere. A large second bedroom has been converted to a storage area where Musselman keeps even more stuff that he's collected for current and future projects—fabric, wood, bric-a-brac, the bleached skulls of animals, parts of toys, scores of dolls' heads, and piles of other paraphernalia. It looks like the storage bin for a yard sale of his own, though, given the eclectic nature of this trove, you'd be hard-pressed to pinpoint the identity or interests of the seller. Indeed, a recent poem that Musselman shows me in his writing journal opens with the line: "Will people understand the yard sale I'll leave behind?"

Musselman tells me that his most recent series of dolls incorporates "everything I've done, everything I love," from his "feminine" passion for fabrics, to his "masculine" interest in woodworking. "It's the child playing with dolls," he adds, "the adult creating a piece from all this." As labor-intensive as they are, Musselman's dolls are not so much about beauty, or craftsmanship, or the primacy of the artifact—though these elements are certainly present—but about creating a kind of fetishistic object that will unlock for both artist and viewer primal, non-verbal realities and responses. "I love dolls because they speak to you subconsciously," he says. "We all dealt with dolls before we could speak. There's no way our adult intellect can fight off the response we have to dolls."

The final lines of another recent poem—"Because you know / your private secret happened to me, / just a different way"—further suggest that in all his work Musselman is trying to unlock in his viewers something more than a mere subjective projection of the unconscious upon the created object. Artist and viewer, teller and listener, share real secrets and experiences even if the individual articulation of those realities

manifests itself in different forms and expressions.

References to African fetish objects frequently surface in Musselman's work. Several of his copperwork sculptures, for example, are studded with rusted nails, a reference inspired by a 1992 trip to Gambia, where he lived for two months studying wood carving and batik. "In African art," he explains, "the nails symbolize the release of pain. Often there's one fetish for the whole town, and the villagers come and drive nails into the places where they're experiencing pain."

Pain is an unavoidable factor in these pieces. Musselman says that he considers his latest dolls to be AIDS quilts—"quilts with no name on them. I've been trying to do a whole series about being an HIV-negative man affected by AIDS. When AIDS first came on the scene, I was living



LEE MUSSELMAN, UNTITLED, 1995
MIXED MEDIA (BABY DOLL AND BUTTONS)

in Ann Arbor, and we all wore a safety pin to symbolize safe sex." He points to a doll covered in safety pins—worth \$40 at retail prices, he estimates. Each safety pin symbolizes "a right decision that someone has made in a dysfunctional world."

Musselman was born in Ypsilanti, Michigan. When he was still quite young, his family moved to the Upper Peninsula, where his father, a lumberjack, had found work. A note of quiet sadness comes into his voice when he speaks of his mother. "She was going to be an opera singer, but got married and had four children instead." His family is "very crafts-oriented." One of his brothers is a wood carver; he has an aunt who is a weaver. His father played banjo, fiddle, and mandolin. "My mother knitted baby clothes non-stop even though she was never a grandmother while she was alive."

When domestic violence threatened the family, Musselman and his mother moved five hun-

dred miles away. He has, he says, "been pretty much supporting myself since I was 12." After high school, he "ran from that little hick town with my bell bottoms and my long hair," back to Ypsilanti, where an uncle got him a job on the assembly line of a Ford factory—a "graduation present." Through that job, he was able to buy a trailer home with his mother, who, shortly thereafter, was diagnosed with cancer. When she died, Musselman moved back to Ann Arbor, where he began to take adult education classes in art. Other than those classes, he says that he is "pretty much self taught."

His years in Ann Arbor were hard ones. For awhile, during his 20s, he lived on the streets.

"When I went to live on the streets, I said to myself, 'Okay, I'll either make a life for myself as an artist or I'll die there.' I had a five-color, spit-curl Mohawk, was wearing sequined tops with layers of chains and safety pins, with skin-tight pants and combat boots and a five-inch moustache. That was my creative outlet."

It's a period in his life that he prefers would not dominate people's idea of who he now is. He doesn't want to be known as this formerly homeless artist, insisting, "I'm way past that." He tells me the story of the day he was sitting on his favorite concrete bench in Ann Arbor. "This man walked up to me. He had no shoes on; his feet and hands and face were covered with blood. I was not there five minutes when he came up to me and said, 'I'm here to tell you to get off the streets.' He was like an angel, a messenger angel."

Shortly afterwards, Musselman moved off the streets, at first living in warehouses and office buildings. He began to pursue his art more seriously. By the mid-'80s he was beginning to place work in group shows in Ann Arbor and other Michigan cities. He also began to curate shows at local galleries. It took him four years to, as he puts it, "finally stop incorporating the streets into my life style." Eventually, he also began to confront his homosexuality and his alcoholism, which led to his decision to get sober.

It was the movie *Dead Poets Society* that helped him to see "how I was holding myself back." He laughs. "Theatrical me! I walked out of the movie crying. It was raining out. I walked down the railroad tracks toward the river, took all my clothes off, climbed on top of a big rock, and screamed and screamed and screamed."

That night, he called a friend from Ann Arbor who had been a fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center. She encouraged him to try Provincetown, a place that Musselman had been dreaming about ever since 12th grade when he fell in love with Bette Midler's recording, "Old Cape Cod." Within 40 days, he had given up his curator's job, closed his cleaning business, and gotten rid of five truckloads of belongings.

"The first thing Provincetown gave me was to show me how oppressed I was. When I went back to Ann Arbor a year later, people said to me, 'Whatever it is you're doing, don't stop. You are so happy!'"

Musselman says that making dolls gives him "permission to do something sissy." Recently, he

has started signing his dolls with an abbreviation of his name: Lee Man.

"Not Musselman," he emphasizes. "It would take up the whole damn doll! Besides, I want everyone to know a *man* made these. I love creating out of a female point of view. I love female energy. Once in Ann Arbor, I signed up for belly dancing classes. The instructor never had to deal with a man before. She didn't want to teach me, because she said she could only teach from a female's point of view. I said to her, 'But I *want* that point of view!' Still, she wouldn't let me take a second semester of classes. There I was, once again confronting the notion that boys do this and girls do that. Somebody who saw my dolls recently said to me, 'If I didn't know you were the artist, I would have thought a woman had done this.' To me that was the sweetest compliment."

Whether or not Musselman's dolls communicate a gendered spirit or sensibility, they do make a powerful impact. "People say my work playfully invites you in and then slams you with a message. I want to reach a population that wants to live in denial about things, or who live in a life style where they feel they don't need to address things—domestic violence, AIDS, homelessness, environment, sex."

Death—in the battered and bruised surface of the dolls' heads, in the imperturbable expressions in their eyes, in the haunting stillness of their presence—is very much present in Musselman's work. He says he has dealt with death his whole life, and indeed, before the end of his freshman year in high school, he suffered the loss of four elementary school friends, each of whom died tragically. By the time he was 18, he'd almost been murdered three times. Several classmates in high school tried to run him off the road. He watched his mother succumb to cancer. The loss of friends to AIDS continues to bring death into the forefront of his experience. "My address book has become a graveyard," he writes in another notebook poem.

Musselman interrupts our conversation to show me a box that has recently arrived from a war memorabilia shop in Florida. In it are five or six items of Holocaust memorabilia, including a pink triangle, body shackles, and a short length of barbed wire—items he plans to incorporate into a collage about the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. He admits that he sometimes goes for "shock value images." One series of pieces he's contemplating involves "children protecting themselves with weapons rather than being the victims of weapons."

The *Adult Children* dolls are the latest in a long series of Musselman's doll projects. His first series, which he called, somewhat autobiographically, *Andy Longlegs*, were stuffed rag dolls, spider-like in the length of their arms and legs, trimmed with various animal furs—monkey, mink, bear—and appliqued with hundreds of plastic ants. He laughs again. "The gallery that was considering taking them on asked me if I could remove the ants." Other series of dolls

Tabitha Vevers



August 2 - 22

DNA
Gallery

288 Bradford St. Provincetown



Nancy Rubens

June 28 to July 11, 1996



Gallery 349

349 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
508.487.1200

followed: *Angel Dolls* made of stuffed felt with small heads ("because angels have no ego") and, Musselman's most notorious, an on-going series he calls *Fag Dolls*.

"A couple of years ago—it must have been one-thirty, two in the morning—I was walking down Commercial Street with a friend and we happened to see something in a gallery window that we really liked. We squealed and ran across the street to look. There was a group of gay men nearby and one of them yelled, 'Look at the art fags!'" Here he breaks into his characteristic high-pitched laugh. "We thought that was so funny. Then the word got out and other people started calling me Art Fag. One day I was at a friend's house and his roommate came out of the shower, took one look at me and yelled, 'Art Fag!' I yelled right back: 'Dick Fag!' And that's how the idea for a whole series of fag dolls got started."

The *Fag Dolls* are a series-in-progress. Current plans include a computer fag, a sober fag, a closet fag, and a dyke fag. "I want to do a line of dyke dolls, too," he tells me, admitting that "the word 'dyke' is kind of problematic, but I'm trying to play with it."

With the recent purchase of a high-quality electric saw, Musselman has been working on new projects, including a series of large, wooden, cut-out figures. On one wall in his new garage studio, hangs an abstract St. Sebastian, cut from a single plank of wood and pierced by half a dozen plastic toy arrows. The words "NO AIDS" are emblazoned on his chest. Musselman's plans for the St. Sebastian series include doing one with lesions all over his body.

The pain at the core of Musselman's work is juxtaposed not only against the more childlike qualities found in the dolls but against a well of spiritual peacefulness that the artist has achieved over the years. "I'm constantly communicating with a higher being. I'm constantly saying thank you for everything I get—whether it's good or bad." He tells me a story about his first night in Africa. Walking through the dark village, he saw a man with no legs, walking on his knees. That was the beginning of an important lesson that his two-month sojourn in Africa taught him: "Internal happiness no matter what life has dealt you. I went away as a man; I came back as an adult. I had to be true to myself—to stick by my commitment to take care of myself. After being homeless, it was nothing for me to handwash my clothes, take a freezing cold sponge bath, have no furniture, eat out of a big bowl."

As we're wrapping up our conversation, he tells me one more story from his time in Africa, underscoring the seemingly paradoxical conjunctions—and the knack he has for turning painful things around—that are so much a part of his work. In Mandinka, the language spoken in Musselman's village, the word for white man is "tubob" and he explains that the villagers used to refer to him as "tubob." "I used to love riding in those Gambian two-wheeled carts pulled by donkeys, but the villagers thought this was very strange. When I'd go by, they'd be laughing hysterically, pointing and saying: 'Tubob on a jackass! Tubob on a jackass!' But then, later on, when

they saw me still on the cart, when they realized their mockery had no effect, they started to say, 'Tubob enjoys riding on a jackass.'" Musselman smiles, on the brink of his flutey laugh. "That kind of threw them," he says. ■

Philip Gambone is the author of the short story collection The Language We Use Up Here. His essays and reviews have appeared in numerous anthologies and journals. Currently he teaches in the expository writing program at Harvard.



S. EDMUND OPPENHEIM, "STANDING GIRL IN WHITE," 1987

S. Edmund Oppenheim

BY LOIS GRIFFEL

I was first acquainted with Oppenheim when I saw one of his portraits in the office of the Art Students League in New York. When I discovered that he was recently retired, and I could no longer take his class, I was disappointed. I did study with his student John Sanden, but I felt I was missing the wisdom of a long artistic journey that Sanden was too young to have acquired. Years later, when I was studying in Provincetown with Henry Hensche, I realized that both Oppenheim and Hensche had absorbed the lessons of Charles Hawthorne, their great teacher, and gone in distinctly different directions.

Viewing Oppenheim's retrospective at the Left Bank Gallery in Wellfleet, I saw in his early work the classical background of a consummate artist. The paintings have careful modeling and great attention to detail and likeness. The familiar tonalist colors, deep grays and browns, are clearly observed. Slowly Oppenheim's paintings evolve until you see extremely soft edges, the use of lighter and richer colors, and his ethereal atmospheric effects. Much like Renoir, he painted lots of pretty women, ballerinas, children, and idealized landscapes we easily recognize. One can be seduced by the serenity and romanticism of his paintings. He brings us back in time. I am constantly reminded of his refined skills in drawing and rendering, and his use of thick, vital colors. Oppenheim embellished these

skills, essential to his exquisite portraiture, and merged them with a modern palette and a masterly touch. ■

Lois Griffel is an artist and the director of the Cape Cod School of Art.

Outsider Artists Inside Provincetown

BY CHRISTINE BUTLER

THE UNDERGROUND GALLERY, in its inaugural season last summer, exhibited local artists in a patchwork display of styles, themes, and aesthetic philosophies. This year director Earl DeVries has given the gallery a strong identity as Provincetown's house of outsider art.

The term "outsider art" was originally coined by British art scholar Roger Cardinal in 1972 in his book of the same title. It was proposed as an equivalent to Jean Dubuffet's term, *art brut*, which also referred to the art produced by individuals so psychologically or mentally impaired that they lived almost completely inside their own heads. Famous examples include Adolf Wolfli (a psychotic pedophile) and Aloise Corbaz (psychotic and autistic), both of whom spent the latter half of their lives in mental institutions. Dubuffet hungered for art that was free of the fear and inhibition that commonly afflict the culturally sophisticated artist, art that was "uncooked by the chefs of culture," and he claimed that anyone who was aware of dominant culture was so influenced by it as to be incapable of accessing a true creative impulse.

We needed a term equivalent to *art brut* because Dubuffet outlawed the use of this term for any art outside of his Collection l'Art Brut, in Lausanne, Switzerland, proclaiming that only his collection and institution could decide if a work of art was truly *brut*. Dubuffet subsequently created an annex collection for "borderline cases" such as religious visionaries, mediumistic types, and artists who, while holding a regular job or raising a family, have compulsively created a vast and intense body of work which reflects a secret inner world of fantasy obsession, the more bizarre, anti-social, and unconventional the better. Though outsider art was originally intended to refer to the art of the insane, it has come to include the types absorbed into Dubuffet's annex collection as well as artists who can be perceived and marketed as "culturally marginalized."

In the past five years of excitement and investment in this exotic new trend, it became apparent that the term "outsider" was politically incorrect. After much writing and debating, with smoke coming out the ears of outsider art officials, the term was disowned and "self-taught" was adopted in its place. Self-taught does not simply mean "didn't go to art school," but rather it means to totally lack any art historical knowledge, past or present. However, case studies of some of the most famous *art brut* and outsider artists reveal them to be highly educated, cul-



DANA BALDWIN, "FATHER AND SON," LEAD RELIEF

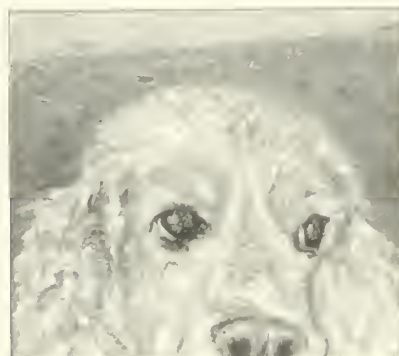
turally sophisticated, socially and economically privileged, and consciously influenced by mainstream artists and philosophers. Frequently, outsider artists are not self-taught. In the effort to label outsider art, its aesthetics have been overlooked in favor of an emphasis on the deprivation, isolation, and anguish associated with it.

We need to dignify the idea of outsider art because, buried under the current marketing ploys, there is a noteworthy aesthetic tradition which has entered art history. The artists that Dubuffet saw as living outside the dominant culture (because they were psychologically cut off from the world around them) were as much a product of culture as anyone else, as is evident in many of their case histories. What does set them apart from other artists is their relative lack of socialization.

Some individuals are not as capable of being socialized as others. Unable to absorb the needs of the group as their own, they repress their personal needs and withdraw. Their identities go underground, while their outward behavior is socially minimal or even unacceptable. Thus is the outsider profile represented this summer at the Underground Gallery. Among these outsiders is Gerald Walsh, who exhibited last summer and was singled out by *Cape Cod Arts and Antiques* as having produced "some of the more stunning paintings of the season." Working with oil stick and pastel on heavy construction paper, Walsh makes pantheistic figures which he calls "gargoyles"—images of fear which reflect our awkward, ugly, and collective denial of the dark side of human nature and which always finds its way into our facial lines, expressions, and body language whenever we forget to pose. Maurice Hansen is remembered by New Haven residents back to the days of the Exit Coffee Shop, which vanished in the early '60s in the fading glory of New Haven's beat scene. His art has been displayed in various movie houses, cafés, and restaurants throughout the downtown area over the past 35 years. The Aetna Conference Center Gallery in Hartford in 1992 sponsored a retrospective of four decades of Hansen's paintings and drawings that Jude Schwen-

Provincetown People (and animals)

AN EXHIBITION - AN EVENT



paintings and collages by

JONATHAN BLUM

September 13 - 26, 1996



Gallery 349

349 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
508.487.1200

CONSTANCE BLACK



Showing recent work in
painting
collage
handmade paper
etchings & monoprint

For information call
(508) 487-4741

denwein, writing in *Art New England*, called "an unforgettable exhibition of over 60 works that reflect Hansen's intensity of purpose as both an artist and a human being." He is a master of metaphor and cross-cultural references, and his compositions are sometimes so crowded with figures that each serves to define the ones next to it. He refers to himself as a "maximalist." He is represented in New York by Bridges + Bodell, a gallery of outsider art.

Anne Brown of Marstons Mills does not relate at all to two-dimensional art, but her imagination runs wild through the rubble and refuse that nature and modern consumerism provide her. When she is "plugged-in," a discarded doll head or the breast bone of a bird become brilliant and zany symbols that access the intricate archetypal realms of her mind. Unsought memories of forgotten experiences suddenly assume a clarity, and her energies power her hands in giving her art physical substance.

Forms created by outsiders—assemblage, sculpture, masks, cryptic imagery—have been "borrowed" into mainstream art. Yet only form can be borrowed, never essence, and it is essence that the outsider artist has to offer. Outsider art, regardless of form, is a vital and direct expression of human suffering which, in validating realities that are culturally taboo, opens us to the possibility of transformation. ■

Christine Butler is an independent curator and artist representative based in Braintree, Connecticut.

The Portraits of Dan Rupe

BY JOSEF QUATTRO

Action and color are two words synonymous with Dan Rupe, whose style of painting presents art as a verb not a noun. In his portraits, landscapes, and still lifes, a vibrant palette echoes the enthusiasm of an artist reviving childhood memories of traveling carnivals in his native Midwest. At times garish, his colors and gesture mock the summertime parade that traipses back and forth along Commercial Street. Wavy lines and bold strokes dance on the surface, a dream-like August heat, documenting what the artist witnesses. Adding force to the busy brush strokes that render intimate, detailed portraits, Rupe achieves a condition of being in the moment with his subject. His surfaces, like moments at a carnival, are full of excitement and energy, emotion and motion.

Working diaristically, Rupe focuses on the Provincetown community and landmarks, and the mass of townies and transients floating along the river of Commercial Street. The shifting tides of people represent something greater than the individual in his portraits, because Rupe paints portraits with a wall in mind, a wall that is an ongoing project, being constructed daily, becoming a landmark of its own. The project began as a series of Provincetown portraits shown at the



DAN RUPE

Art Association in 1995, then wound its way up the stairway of the Town Library. Continuing the theme, his "Wall of Support," a group of 16 portraits of volunteers for the annual auction sponsored by the Provincetown AIDS Support Group, is assembled like a quilt, each portrait a panel in relation to another portrait. Unlike The Names Project, a quilt that focuses on those who have died, Rupe's project documents the living, those working to get beyond the fear, uncertainty, and sadness that surrounds us.

Rupe paints from life about life, framing his subjects up close while isolating them. His *Drag Series*, dual persona portraits, captures the yin-yang of his subjects. The artist is busy, unearthing his observations, distinguishing his community. The *Drag Series*, like the "Wall," is just one section of a greater wall. Now two years in the making, Rupe's Provincetown portraits are multiplying. He wants to let no one slip by without being caught in paint. He wants a grand wall, large enough to protect the town from the rest of the world and save the summer carnival as a sacred place. This is his way of embracing the people he loves in a town where even the smallest stars shine brightly. ■

Josef Quattro is a Provincetown-based writer.

The Work of Judith Shahn: An Appreciation

JOHN SKOYLES

A painting by Judith Shahn fulfills Robert Frost's dictum for a successful work of art: it begins in delight and ends in wisdom. At first struck by the exactitude of her technique and the lure of her way with color, I feel, as the painting or print stays with me, that I have been led to a part of the world I had known but forgotten, so that my experience is like a memory recovered. And there it is before me: the restaurant I want to

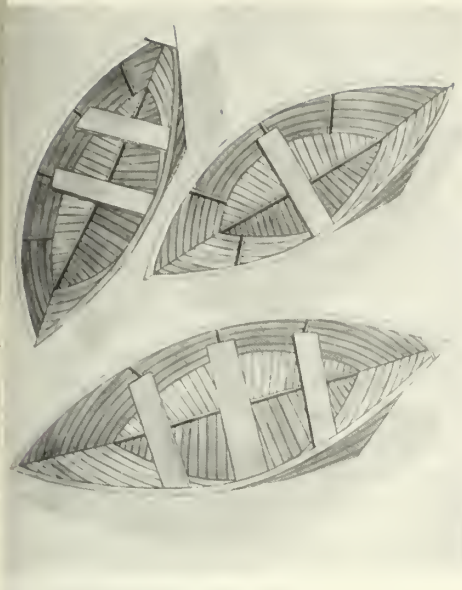
enter again; the skiff on the porch pointing toward the bay; the hardy beachgrass I might have passed by. These images allow us to remember with the specificity of a dream, and we are richer and wiser for it.

Recollections are conveyed through detail, and memory plays a significant part in this work. To those who know her, Judith has a remarkable memory. In her spoken narratives, she brings to life a great deal of New York City and Outer Cape history. In the exacting images of her paintings and prints, she captures objects, landscapes and figures as well. Gaston Bachelard has written, "Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are." There can be no dispute about the soundness of Judith's images. In one of her most engaging pieces, *Weirs*, an oil on canvas from the '50s, her attention to detail, an attention triggered by her strong sense of history, is evident. A close look at the top of the weir's gate shows it is made of wood, not rope. Years ago, a Truro trap fisherman remarked, on seeing the painting, that it was a Provincetown, not a Truro trap. When asked how he could tell, he explained that after a Truro crew member had been killed in an accident involving the top wooden bar of the gate, Truro crews from then on replaced the wood with rope. It is this kind of attention to detail that gives Shahn's work its conviction.

It seems to me paramount to mention the high focus, the precision with which Shahn approaches these pieces. She works with a diamond-cutter's exactness, her lines so fine and true that the surface reflects and glints in a way that not only illuminates its subject, but causes the subject to illuminate its surroundings.

In looking at the objects Judith has chosen, in paintings like *Blue Bottles*, *Oil Lamp*, *Bananas*, and *Jars and Clamshell*, I feel she has made them personal, that she has rendered each one with such specificity that its singularity becomes intimate. A reviewer once described her accomplishment this way: "Her subjects—a favorite chair, a pitcher, a patch of garden—convey much humanity." In her work the local becomes universal, and her affection for an object becomes mine as well.

Another moving dimension of Shahn's work involves her figures and street scenes. The very early *29 East Tenth Street* is both eerie and amusing. The gray facade and seeming emptiness of the building suggest bleakness and even menace. Yet the name of the company, "O.B. Fish," and its product, "Raw Feathers," impart an almost light touch that deepens its mystery. The sky in *New England Landscape* rages with a political harbinger that suggests change or implosion. The monolithic factory pulsates and seethes, with the chimney the inadequate outlet for the forces mounting inside. Clearly, something is about to give. *Loans* shows a figure dwarfed by the sign, and the expression on the woman's face is not happy. Yet she carries a spray of tiny flowers. Here, as in all of Shahn's work, the clean focus joined with the quirky detail results in subtlety and complexity of feeling.



JUDITH SHAHN, "THREE SKIFFS," 1987

Two dramatic landscapes, *Multiple Landscape* and *South Truro Meeting House*, show the work in a different light. The former, nine views of the Hopper House, displays varied angles of vision. The latter captures another aspect of the Cape and, as with the Hopper piece, Shahn proceeds by contrasts, so that we feel the grandeur of the building, the beauty of the dry grasses. The building in "Meeting House" is majestic, stalwart and proper, all the more so for its bare brick foundation and the terrain of rough grass surrounding it. The contrast heightens the impression of an understated and convincing dignity.

Most remarkable to me are the recent paintings. Those completed in the last two years seem to me among the strongest work. The images in *Five Firkins*, *Cranberries*, and *Quahogs and Clam Rake* are so vibrant as to be almost alert. Myron Stout once remarked that Shahn's work had a surreal quality, and that aspect of her painting can be seen in the recent *Sunflowers*, where the writhing petals leap so wildly and are painted with such life that they seem nearly carnivorous.

Judith Shahn's paintings are vivid and evocative. They focus on both everyday and unusual objects and illuminate them in stunning and beckoning ways. Her interiors have a vista-like quality; their loveliness, and the peace they promise, is irresistible. When I spend time near one of her works, I never fail to enter its hold. Once there, I am hard pressed to leave. Which is why I am grateful for this retrospective of more than fifty years of paintings and prints, in which we are treated to the range and depth of Shahn's work. In landscapes, cityscapes, portraits, still lifes, and figures, Shahn has created a world ignited by a precision that stops you in your tracks and makes you consider each of its elements all over again. This work begins in delight and ends in wisdom, the wisdom to give over to a vision that holds firm while so much swirls around us. ■

John Skoyles, director of the writing program at Emerson College, is completing a memoir. This essay appeared in the catalogue that accompanied Judith Shahn's retrospective this year at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum.

Life, Color, Form: Provincetown, Koganei

BY SHEILA SINEAD MCGUINNESS

A group of American artists from the Cortland Jessup Gallery in Provincetown flew west into the sun on a morning flight to Tokyo. The day became earlier with each time zone they crossed. Yet, in a bizarre aberration somewhere in the Pacific, the plane flew into tomorrow—not yesterday—before reaching the Land of the Rising Sun. In this nation where women's laughter is often stifled by their own hands, artistic expression provides a nucleus around which they gather to form an identity. In 1993, a multigenerational group of painters, sculptors, and weavers marked a centenary celebration of their city, Koganei, with an art exhibition. Later, Cortland Jessup invited them to show in her gallery. This March, on the second leg of the trans-Pacific cultural exchange, 11 American artists showed in Koganei's Gallery Hashimoto and Gallery Brocken. And within a few days of their arrival, the women celebrated the vernal equinox at a Shinto shrine.

The scene is ageless. On the sacred mountain Takao, fragrant plum blossoms begin to emerge on the morning of the vernal equinox. Adorned with braids to mark their longevity, Japanese cedars rise out of the mist where they have towered for over 500 years. After purification with water and smoke from bundled incense, devotees enter the back of Yakoun temple. In reverence for the immense power that resides within all living organisms, men in flowing robes at the front of the temple make prayers and offerings. Only a week earlier, Shugendo ascetics walked with bare feet across fiery coals on the downskirts of this mountain, and sat beneath its icy Biwa waterfall.

Ten Americans and four Japanese interpreters travelled with weaver Akiko Kon to this place, an hour's train ride outside the 800-square-mile Tokyo metropolis. Kon knows Mt. Takao's river, as she knows many rivers around Tokyo. She walks them daily, contemplating the water,

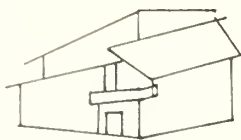
and then approaches her loom. As a result of infusing herself within the natural world, she weaves the movement of water into her work. Using varying degrees of tension on delicate white, silver, gold, and brown filaments, she created two spectacular floor-to-ceiling panels for the Provincetown show.

Kozan, a 90-year-old Sumi ink calligrapher, uses the same sort of process. He repeatedly copies the works of an ancient master, until he is infused with the ancient's spirit. Then, in a way which is truly "inspired" through Kozan's hand, the spirit of the master moves from the past into the present. A professor at Tokyo Art University for 60 years, Kozan (whose name means Lake Mountain) has spent his life bringing forth the spirits of 41 such masters. It was an honor for the Americans to meet the artist at his retrospective, for his work is renowned and calligraphy is a juncture of poetry and painting that does not exist in Western art, though it has flourished in Eastern art for more than a thousand years.

Whether in the east or west, ritual and ceremonial dress mark the importance of particular events. In Provincetown the opening of the exchange exhibition was celebrated with food and beverages, and gifts of flowers to the artists. But at the artists' talk, scheduled half-way through the show, some of the Japanese wore traditional kimonos and obis of embroidered and highly-colored silks, while others wore linen and silk jackets woven on the same looms they used to create textile sculptures. Thus, they imbued the occasion with formality, and communicated a cultural norm: to them, the artists' talk is more important than the opening. But at the opening party in Koganei, Ramona Peters, a native Wompanoag, celebrated by wearing a traditional deerskin dress adorned with porcupine quills and colored beads, deerskin leggings and moccasins, and a headpiece of hawk feathers. With these



ARTISTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE EXCHANGE WERE MARI YAMARYO, TOSHIE KAWANI, AKIKO KON, AYAKO YODOI, SATOKO YAMAMOTO, RYOKO IIDA, MIDORI TAGUCHI, CHII SUGANO, LILLIAN ORLOWSKY, MIKE WRIGHT, SARAH RANDOLPH, IREN HANDSCHUH, RAMONA PETERS, MYRNA HARRISON, JULIET HOLLAND, JOAN GIORDANO, JOANNE BERGHOLD, ELIZABETH MACDONALD, AND LESLIE LEE. THEY OWE GRATITUDE TO ETSUKO SANO OF GALLERY BROCKEN, YAYOI HASHIMOTO, MARI YAMARYO, AND CORTLAND JESSUP, TO KENJI YAMARYO FOR HIS MANY KIND FAVORS, AND TO MASAKO ITZUTSU FOR HER PROFOUND VISION.

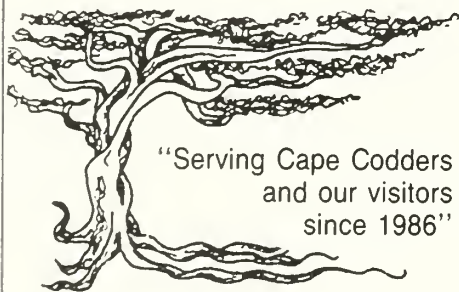


PROVINCETOWN DENTAL ASSOCIATES

Cheryl L. Andrews, D.M.D.
Fellow, Academy of General Dentistry

86 HARRY KEMP WAY
PROVINCETOWN
MASSACHUSETTS 02657
(508) 487-9936

SPERRY CHIROPRACTIC



"Serving Cape Codders
and our visitors
since 1986"

Dr. Paula J. Sperry
Commercial Street
Provincetown

(508) 487-9625

emphases on ceremonial garments it should have been no surprise when, on a separate occasion, Michiko Hara gave each American an antique silk kimono and obi of her own!

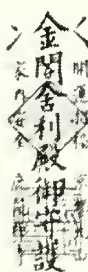
In a more intimate sense, Japanese generosity manifested in the universal language of hospitality. They accepted the burden of communication by speaking English, and by providing interpreters at every event and occasion. Some graciously provided housing for Americans; and some welcomed the 13 Americans into their homes for dinner. These offerings transcended the norm. Owing to the close quarters in which most Japanese live, guests are not usually entertained in the home. Socializing more often takes the form of an excursion or a dinner out, such as the day at Mt. Takao which ended with a meal at an elegant restaurant for which Kon and her husband, Kazuhiko Imaoka, bore the cost.

To Americans whose culture celebrates the nature and achievements of individuals, experiencing Japanese adherence to a group ethos may be difficult. But the cultural value is responsible for building strong communities, and Jessup's artists clearly benefitted from it. The Koganei group's huge network—friends, families, co-workers, collectors, art dealers, and even a man who recently had an auto accident with one of the members!—all supported the events. This resulted in the show's financial success, and dispelled the myth of closed Japanese markets.

Success can be measured also by how many people participated in the show's many events, by how many pieces of art were purchased, or by how many future exhibits were scheduled. But its most profound value is less tangible, for it lies in the spiritual realm. The act of creating art, as with practicing sacred ritual, expresses the human desire to connect with the divine. The effort transcends the human constructs of cultural and national boundaries, indeed, of time itself.

The Koganei women's group that hosted the Americans embodied the great spirit of generosity that is the impulse of the Japanese people. Two weeks after they arrived, the American artists left Koganei with friendships that brook the chasm of cultures as different as east and west. On the flight home, they saw in the midnight sky a magnificent display of the Aurora Borealis. In it they witnessed the mysterious power of impulses released from the earth to mingle in a solar wind. ■

Sheila Sinead McGuinness is editor of
Provincetown Magazine.



Japan Quatrains

BY SARAH RANDOLPH

Introduction

When I close my eyes I remember green tea in a white porcelain cup, a bright, clear liquid the color of spring. I can feel its heat, sharp and pleasurable, against my palms. Imagine countless cups of tea like this, little ceremonies, moments of calm in a whirl of meetings and encounters. Whenever someone came to the gallery, and had a minute to stay, delicate cups were handed around. Whenever I entered anyone's home it was offered—green tea, ocha, or sometimes the everyday roasted tea called *hojicha*, or the deliciously bitter powdered tea, *matcha*, whipped to a froth in a large tea bowl with a bamboo whisk. In Japan, relationships begin with tea. Japan has always been a muse for me. As a child I lived among slender Japanese vases and folding screens that depicted mist-veiled mountains. My mother was a collector of Japanese antiquities: porcelain, paintings, the tiny carved figures of *netsuke*, the patterned disks of sword guards. For years she took me with her to museums and tiny, crowded antique shops where I shuffled my feet as if bored—how she despaired of me—while the forms and images soaked in. I was young enough to be restless and rebellious when observed, but secretly I was falling in love. So long have I loved Japanese aesthetics—its mix of rustic teabowls and plastic children's lunchboxes with "Hello Kitty!" printed on them, its spare haiku, its bitter postwar novels, the austerity of its high art and the giddiness of its popular culture—so long have I loved it all that I was a little afraid to finally meet it face to face. (Imagine an affair of many years carried on entirely by letter, imagine that first bodily encounter.) But when I learned two years ago that Cortland Jessup was planning to take a group of artists to Japan, I began, quite blatantly, to linger at the front desk of her gallery. A friendship grew up out of that lingering.

All through the heat of last summer Cortland and I met at her gallery on Wednesday afternoons with Mitsuyo Mori, a Japanese painter who had agreed to try and teach us her language. We sat with glasses of iced coffee in front of whirring fans, listening to the cadence of Mitsuyo's voice, trying to learn the music of Japanese. "*Hajime mashite*," we began, meaning "I'm pleased to meet you," but saying literally, "It is the first time."

In September the Japanese artists arrived. We met them at the airport with phrases of welcome stuttering in our mouths. "*Yoku irassha-imashita*," we tried to say. They smiled back encouragingly. Through the two weeks of their stay we used whatever language we had in common, their substantial English, our tiny hoard of Japanese words, and with one artist, Ayako Yodoi, the French I had studied all through school. When words failed, we stood in front of

each others' work, pointing and making shapes with our hands.

Months later I landed, at last, in Tokyo. Through the haze of jet lag I felt a shock of familiarity. Japan was nothing like I had imagined (how could it be) but I recognized it the way you know people and places in dreams. I knew immediately that I would return to Japan, not once but over a long period of my life.

As a group we were treated with astonishing generosity by our Japanese hosts. We were taken into studios and workshops rich with the activity of making, invited into homes and fragrant kitchens, brought to museum openings and gallery parties, guided to favorite mountaintops and temples. And as I stayed on I was offered friendship in eager conversations over coffee with my well-thumbed Japanese dictionary, or talk that unfolded over a long evening dipping vegetables, chicken, squares of tofu into hot broth that bubbled on a burner at the table.

The whirl of images is still sorting itself out in me, and I am sure it will be months before I know what they mean. Small fields in the city growing rows of thick green onion. Shrine statues, jizos, with their handknit red caps. Pink and green advertisements in the subways, dressed for spring. Arrays of sweets: tiny candies in colors that looked like fallen flowers, or mochi balls filled with bean paste, dusty with rice flower, stacked in pyramids—they had a wonderful sculptural heft to them. Roof tiles. Bamboo groves. The clarity and color of green tea in a cup.

These images reappear to me in dreams and in poems, shuffled and changed, carrying messages. The most important message they carry: this is only the first time, you must return.

Japan Quatrains

0 Oishii desu. Oishii desu. It is delicious. It is delicious.

1 Pink condiments, yellow green appointments at the paper leaf hour, dishes of meishi.

2 Nan dake? Nan dake? What just the right word? Sticky gravel we take our shoes off to feel.

3 One of several women for whom the teabowl is audience. Weeks of this my flesh for a time entranced.

4 A vocabulary of small noodles, faces, and many-hued trains. What is liveable? Who is leaning into the charcoal evening?

5 Shoe noises, especially arigato gozaimashita. A ceramic light, streaked and flawed. Sometimes rice, south of the elbow.

6 Your bamboo hours, rice mist, telephone shrines. Your garments of azalea: pale green robes for a nonverbal sky.

7 As if laughing. As if pink. A Matisse hanami, obi wrapped.

8 Water blessed hands: the shrine at Ise. Gassho towards the mists, inward.

9 Jya, ne? So desu, ne? Jya. So desu.

10 In the capital plum flowers doubling then nightingales among the bicycles. No parting, but return.

Glossary

Oishii desu: It is delicious. Meishi: Business cards. Nan dake: literally "what just," or "what

exactly," a phrase used often when searching mentally for an English word. Arigato Gozaimashita: Thank you. Hanami: A picnic under cherry blossoms. Gassho: a formal bow with hands pressed together. Jya, ne?: Well, isn't it so? So desu, ne?: It's so, isn't it? Jya: Well. So desu: So it is. ■

Sarah Randolph will return to Japan in the fall of 1997 for exhibitions at Gallery Brocken in Koganei/Tokyo and Gallery in the Blue in Utsunomiya.

Four Provincetown Art Dealers

BY JOSEF QUATTRO

The inhabitants of Provincetown are fortunate to live in a village rich with seafaring stories and cultural history. They also inhabit an art colony that represents a microcosm of the art world, a place thriving with creative energy and an ongoing art dialogue. For nearly 100 years, modern and traditional concerns about surface, color, form, have traveled back and forth over the dunes, been argued up and down the street. Within this dialogue, art dealers have played an integral part by giving artists an arena in which to exhibit their work.

In concept, an art gallery is about showing art, making a public forum for artists to engage others in their work. In reality, art dealers cannot always just be concerned with art and dialogue. As galleries come and go every year, art dealers must concern themselves with the business of art. Business and art? They may not sound synonymous, or even harmonious, but mingling business and art is the conundrum of art dealers. How dealers survive is an art in itself.

Mirroring America's state of art and culture, dwindling budgets, and reduced funding, galleries disappear from town. Recent closings include Gallery Matrix before its fifth year and The Collection Gallery after just one year. Berta Walker has decided to close the West End Window Gallery, which included Portia Munson's dynamic installations and other happenings. The space is being converted into a shop with hopes that it will become financially self-sufficient.

To balance the losses, galleries appear. DNA Gallery is heading into its third season with a new director, Pamela Mandell. Owner Nick Lawrence hopes the gallery will begin to support itself. Kir Priore will open Gallery 349 for a second year, proving it's possible for new galleries to survive a season. Instead of losing a gallery with the closing of Hell's Kitchen, last year the space was taken over by the William-Scott Gallery. And Passions Gallery, after a year in Key West, returns to Provincetown under the direction of Ester Lastique.

LOCAL ARTISTS
FRAME SHOP & GALLERY

Provincetown's
Custom Framer
Since 1983

CAROL TAYLOR
39 Pearl St.
Provincetown
508-487-9162



Halcyon

*a gallery of
art-to-wear*

*Specializing in
handmade clothing and
jewelry by American artists.*

*Also featuring a discriminating
collection of hand-blown glass
and decorative items.*

BLUE FISH
Remarkable Clothing

371 Commercial Street, Provincetown

(508) 487-9415

OPEN DAILY



JULIE HELLER



ALBERT MEROLA

**French sandals so comfortable,
they even make the Parisians smile.**

Exclusively at

NORTHERN LIGHTS LEATHER



**SENSATIONAL
LEATHERS
FOR MEN & WOMEN**

**Beautiful Jackets,
Handbags, Luggage, Belts
& Accessories**

**including a complete line of
Euro-Comfort Footwear**

**SINCE 1974
OPEN YEAR ROUND
at 10:00 AM**

361 COMMERCIAL STREET, PROVINCETOWN • 508-487-9376

Throughout its history, Provincetown has proven itself adaptable to change. The fishing industry settled the town, but now families who relied on the industry have moved into other realms. Some galleries have done the same. Within its seven year life, the Cortland Jessup Gallery has cultivated an exchange program with Japan which offers gallery artists an opportunity to exhibit outside the United States. Once funded largely by grants, the Fine Arts Work Center has created a summer workshop program to become more self-reliant. Besides bringing artists to town, the Work Center is integral to change. Richard Baker, Portia Munson, Nicholas Kahn, and Richard Selesnick are recent Work Center fellows who have explored new dimensions of their work before taking shows to New York. These artists are also represented by local art dealers.

Beyond financial concerns, art dealers are the voices behind gallery doors, voices that shape an aesthetic point of view. The following monologues are a glimpse into the nature of four established art dealers. They are people who have survived years, weathered seasons, and been part of the ongoing Provincetown dialogue.

In 1980, Julie Heller opened the Julie Heller Gallery in the East End of town. Gallery by day, she transformed the space into an apartment at night by drawing a curtain and rolling out a futon on the floor. Eventually, she left the space and moved into the center of town, where her gallery still resides next to the

bay. Heller also maintains the position of Chair for the Provincetown Arts Commission.

Julie Heller: The purpose of a gallery is to educate, to introduce work old and new, to teach people about what they're looking at. I had a couple come into the gallery last summer and they told me they had a Matisse. They were very pedestrian looking people and I thought: They have a Matisse? What's wrong with this picture? They bantered back and forth about whether it was a painting or a print. When I asked them where they bought it they said: "The Met." It was a poster and they thought they had an original piece of art.

Sometimes I show artists and I know the work isn't going to sell. It's a luxury of being able to balance the old and the new. New artists need a place to show. And old artists are sometimes forgotten because they aren't being shown.

I don't think a person sells art. Art sells itself. If dealers don't believe in the art they're showing, then they're just merchants, salespeople. There's no way they can educate, aid, or guide their customers. It has nothing to do with ethics or integrity. I have a theory about memory and association. When a person looks at a piece, they make associations, not necessarily childhood associations, but image associations, the way in dreams certain forms show up repeatedly. Art relates old experiences to the new, a new way of seeing the old.

On a good day, I'm terribly open-minded and I like to think people are looking for something to enhance their life. It may not be what I like or what I consider art. But they are people who are making room for art. I think it's important that people have art in their lives. How could people not have art? To me it would be like living without air.

Albert Merola, in partnership with James Balla, began by selling art privately. Within a couple of years, the duo opened the UFO Gallery—the initials stand for "universal fine objects"—a contemporary art gallery now its ninth season. The name UFO was chosen when Merola and Balla thought of building a business that would eventually include fine objects, like the Picasso ceramics they now sell. The name had nothing to do with flying saucers.

Albert Merola: Acquiring, promoting, placing, and selling the work is the work of a dealer. The artist shouldn't have to focus on these things. It takes away from their work. A gallery is a commercial place. Thousands of people come through, but there's a small percentage of people who like what they see, and an even smaller percentage who make a purchase. I have a lot of respect for Provincetown. It's difficult to last as a business. Two months is a very intense season. At times I wish there could be more fun involved for the dealer. Being on the verge sometimes takes the fun out of it. When you're a new gallery, everyone talks about how wonderful you are. Then the following year, they don't even come in. If you survive for years, the attitude changes again. I think right now in Provincetown, it's been good for a lot of galleries. There



BUNNY PEARLMAN



BERTA WALKER

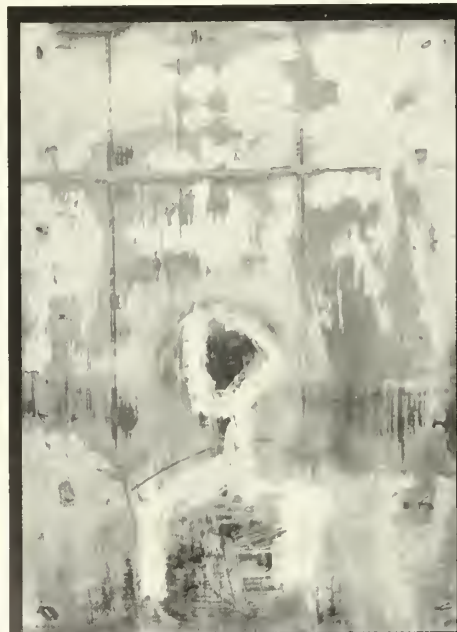
have been many that have come and gone, but there are a handful that are solid.

On some level, I think a gallery is educational. I think we're always confronted with the idea of what is saleable, but a gallery should be carrying on a tradition. We're not museums, but we have to educate the public. I've handled art that I'm not crazy for, but I've never sold work that I don't think is worthy of passing on to someone else. It comes from sticking to my point of view. I think sticking to a point of view builds trust between you and the client, you and the artist, you and the town.

Art can be tricky. I understand why we should have art around but I don't understand why people buy it. The idea can be reduced to simple thoughts: I've got to have it. I want nice things. I'm compulsive. Actually, I think it's very compulsive. A felt thing, a connection that is very strong. Beyond that, I still think it's unexplainable why people buy art.

The East End Gallery, perhaps the oldest gallery in town, once run by members, eventually came under the sole direction and responsibility of Bunny Pearlman. Due to changes in real estate ownership, the gallery has relocated before opening in its ninth season. Pearlman is also an artist with an interest in figuration and landscape.

Bunny Pearlman: I think communities like Provincetown at times function perfectly. They're insulating enough so artists can turn inward or wherever the part is that helps them transcend. Then what happens out of this process is a group of galleries pops up and kids are



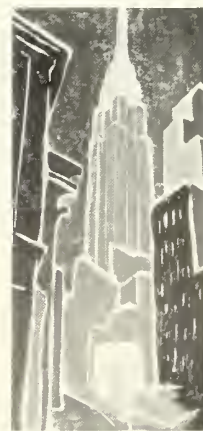
M.P. Landis
(silence)

August 2-15

Gallery 349
349 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
508.487.1200

EVAUL
STUDIOS

New York to Provincetown



BILL EVAUL "City Canyon"

Represented by
Cove Gallery, Wellfleet
Madeline Fortunoff, New York
Andrew Stasik Fine Art, Darien, CT
Aaron Galleries, Chicago

Fine Art
• Paintings, prints & portraits
• Private Instruction & Workshops
Fine Art Services
• Consulting & Curating
• Appraisals of Contemporary Art

Evaul Studios

Phone: 508-487-1426
e-mail: whevaul@capecod.net

able to show their work. A few sell enough so they don't have to do something, like waiting, to support themselves.

It concerns me that everyone is taking less risks. Artists are taking less risks. Galleries are taking less risks. We have a danger in Provincetown, we have a danger of creating resort-wear. People come in from the beach in their shorts and are looking for work that reflects their vacation experience, not what they're trying to escape from, like AIDS and War. I'm not saying art has to be about issues. It's about truth, a truth that's not guarded by an artist's survival. Creating a mystique about the specialness of art or a particular artist can be dangerous, too. The most special thing is the process and the search for the truth of it.

When you have a gallery you're selling art. You can't but be influenced by what your collectors are interested in. When people buy art they start with what they feel comfortable with and what their neighbors feel comfortable with. That's where fashion comes in. The sad aspect is the better a dealer gets at being selective, the smaller the audience. If the whole community worked toward a larger audience, we would attract a broader range. We're actually pretty much in touch with the fashion mavens coming from New York. We feed the cycle too. The unfortunate part is watching young artists shape their work to what they can sell.

When you sell art, it's very hard not to think

of it as merchandise. You have to or you're not going to be there next year. I think art needs to comment on human kind, to affect, to illuminate, and to be seen by people. For me it's definitely been a kind of crisis in conflict. Dealers and artists speak different languages. But there's a language in between, a sign language.

Fundraising for the Fine Arts Work Center led to a position at Marisa Del Ray Gallery for Berta Walker. She went on to curate the contemporary shows at Graham Galleries, an established New York dealer. After years of experience, she decided to purchase Bayer Fine Arts from Sam Hardison in 1990. She assumed the gallery under her own name, then moved it to Bradford Street.

Berta Walker: I like to think people understand how important the arts are, but they don't. Take our town officials: I don't see them bending over backwards for the arts. Provincetown is the history of American art as seen through the eyes of Provincetown. We are an art colony, something that van Gogh sought, a colony of creative people. We represent the truth of freedom. But now, we're in the same problem that we always are in an art community, which is there's no where to rent. It's all gone to real estate.

Outsiders look at a gallery and they say: "Look at all those red dots on the wall. She's making a ton of money." They forget about the crucial things. Like mortgages, electricity, outrageous insurance, putting rugs on your floors, sending

to a mailing list of 2500. Add that up, that's the side of a gallery that's a business.

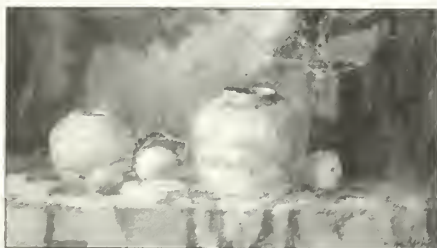
Part of the excitement for me is showing some of the older figurative artists, like Oliver Chaffee, Nancy Whorf, and George Yater. They were eclipsed by trends because they didn't do abstract, pop, or conceptual. They prove that it's time to look at art for art's sake, not just its promotional ability.

I think that more collectors aren't spending the extra thousands, since they don't have it. Instead of just buying a big name for lots of money, they're shopping for what they like. I don't try to sell art to people because that's ridiculous. My job is to help the collectors give themselves permission to have that art in their lives.

Art is for everyone. Here in Provincetown, it's a most exciting place to have a gallery. Every show I put up is well-seen by artists, collectors, historians, everyone. The show can have an impact. Here I don't have to be a New York gallery with one kind of art, all conceptual, all abstract. I can just have great art. My idea of a gallery is to make it homey, moody, contemplative. I feel I'm doing my job when I see artists taking chances. Sometimes it means it's not going to sell, sometimes it means it's not going to be very good, but we all have to learn to walk. ■

Josef Quattro's review of the portraits of Dan Rupe appears elsewhere in this issue.

HILDA NEILY GALLERY



Traditional
Impressionist
Oil Paintings

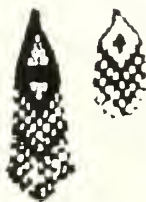
Sales • Commissions

336 COMMERCIAL ST., #5
P.O. Box 1402
PROVINCETOWN, MA 02657
508-487-6300 or 487-0144

~Turquoise • Horn • Bone~

Mingus Beads & Trading

1025 "B" N. Main St.
Old Town Cottonwood
AZ 86326



Marianne Miles

520-639-3522

Open: Everyday, except Sundays

~Rabbit • Deer Skins~

~Supplies • Findings • Books • Fimo~

~Amber • Beads from over 50 Countries~

Did you hear?



I am **ONE SPORT**
– the little brother of
Silk & Feathers.



Doublewhite

KAROL RICHARDSON

CONTEMPORARY
WOMEN'S CLOTHING
& ACCESSORIES
FOR ALL SEASONS

Photo Credit • Tom Johnson

47 MAIN STREET • ORLEANS • 508-255-3944

11 WEST MAIN STREET • WELFLEET • 349-6378



ELIZABETH MCCrackEN

A Talk with Elizabeth McCracken

BY PAUL LISICKY

Elizabeth McCracken is the author of *Here's Your Hat What's Your Hurry* (Random House, 1993), one of the best short story collections to appear in recent years. Her work has appeared in *Story*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Epoch*, and other magazines. Her awards include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the James Michener/Copernicus Society, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, and an ALA Notable Book Award. As of this writing, she was a finalist for *Granta's* award for Best Young American Novelists.

I first met Elizabeth at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where we were both students in the late 1980s. Of all my classmates, her stories touched me the most. More than a few times I remember calling up my writer friends back East to read her new work aloud to them. In 1992, we turned up at the Fine Arts Work Center together, where we were both second-year fellows. We've been close friends ever since, sharing a passion for such toxic pleasures as the Town House Restaurant, tattoos, gossip, the Crown and Anchor, trashy love songs, great literature, and the occasional cigarette.

Elizabeth's first novel, *The Giant's House*, is scheduled for publication this summer. Set in 1950s Cape Cod, it tells the story of Peggy Cort, a 26-year-old librarian whose life is changed once she meets James Sweatt, an "overtall" 11-year-old boy, who crosses her path one day at the circulation desk. Soon their lives become intertwined in increasingly complicated ways. In James, Peggy meets the one person who's ever understood her, and as he grows—from six-foot-five to eight-foot-seven—so does their love for one another. The novel is imbued with all the elements I admire most about Elizabeth's stories: an expansive emotional range, a quirky point of view, and rich, sympathetic characters. Like *Here's Your Hat*, it will, I suspect, be a book that readers will keep coming back to, that will deepen upon rereading, breaking our hearts over and over, not because it's in any way sentimental, but for its essential generosity and wisdom, for what it has to teach us.

Paul Lisicky: What wouldn't you write about? What wouldn't happen in an Elizabeth McCracken story?

Elizabeth McCracken: There are all sorts of things I haven't written about, that I'll explore later when I get better. I feel that way about sex scenes. In my short story collection, nobody has sex.

PL: There's that little incident in the story "June."

EM: That's true, but they don't actually get their clothes off. In my novel there's a little sex, and I keep thinking, Well, you can do a little more every time. Maybe my last book will be an absolute smutfest.

PL: What about a story in which the protagonist shoots all the minor characters in the final scene? Would you shy away from something like that?

EM: There's a part of me that always likes to take on a good challenge. Matt Klam reminded me recently how Rocket Bride [one of a mutually invented series of comic strip characters] came into being at the Fine Arts Work Center, and that both you and I dared each other to put her into our books. And then Rocket Bride ended up being an important part of the novel.

PL: An amazing part of the novel.

EM: But written completely out of a dare, so I certainly take dares. There are certain things I'm not interested in writing about because I'm not interested in reading about them. I tend not to like to read about alienation. Great books about alienation are so difficult to write. They can be very moving, but I think too many writers choose that subject because it seems easier. And in some ways it is easier.

PL: Particularly writing about those characters who don't attempt to transcend their situation, to join with community.

EM: That's something I definitely lose more and more patience with. I remember hearing Allan Gurganus really harp on that at Iowa. At the time I thought, yeah, yeah. But once I started writing the novel, I realized how true that was. In the early drafts of the book, people were always looking at the sides of each other's faces, and were never really having conversations. And I had to work on that. How can you write a novel with characters who are always missing each other?

PL: You've written both novels and short stories. Do you think of yourself now as a novelist or story writer?

EM: I really miss writing short stories, though I haven't written one in ages. Every now and then I write half a story and never think about it again. There's something so gratifying about having an entire novel to muck around in. I told you earlier than when Ann Patchett and I printed out our books at the Work Center we stood on top of them to see how much taller they made us. I like that feeling.

PL: Did you always write?

EM: I was the kid who was always writing. For a long time I thought I was going to be a poet.

PL: Were you writing fiction when you were fairly young?

EM: I wrote some fiction when I was in high school, but I also wrote a huge amount of light verse. It's a muscle I don't have anymore. I used to be really good at writing scanned rhymed funny stuff. And then I went to college and took a class with Sue Miller, who was absolutely wonderful, a perfect teacher.

PL: Both she and Allan Gurganus were particularly influential to your development as a writer. They shepherded your work.

EM: They did, and they were incredibly generous as teachers, both in terms of their criticism and in their ability to assume the best about any story. I especially remember that of Allan, which was one of the things that made him such a good teacher. You can get into a workshop where a teacher can like only one sort of story. Both Sue and Allan appreciated a wide variety of sensibilities, and never said, You can't do this in a story.

PL: Which seems to happen with some frequency. That notion seems to pervade some of the work that's out there—a kind of emotional deadening, which is really about the fear of sentimentality or melodrama.

EM: Some teachers and classmates will try to break you of your bad habits, but I think your bad habits are your voice. Maybe if you keep writing lush, overripe metaphors, you should cut some of them from your work, but it doesn't mean you should stop writing them altogether.

PL: I've heard it said that a writer's bad habits are close to his strengths.

EM: I strongly feel that way. And that's why certain stories are labeled "workshop" stories. These stories have been broken of all their bad habits, and the writer is simply not being ambitious any more, because it's easier to write a passable boring story.

PL: I was just reading through a course description of a workshop you taught last year. In it you said, "Some of the best stories are ones that try to accomplish what might sound like too much: bad jokes, high drama, slapstick, messy endings. In order to create a world in a few pages, you need first to learn a *lack* of restraint, and then how to shape the result."

EM: That's definitely how I feel. I have very little patience for writing that risks nothing.

PL: Better to accept the notion that not everyone's going to respond to your work.

EM: Grace Paley is one of my favorite writers. If you try to describe some of her stories, they sound like they're doing too much. There's one about a bad family, in which one kid konks another kid with a board after he's slipped in some olive oil. If you describe what happens there, there's nothing in it that would fit any of the definitions of what a short story should do, but it works. I think her work is touching and hilarious and bizarre and unrealistic.

PL: And is always in complete command, even while letting it fly.

EM: Right. There's just nobody else like her, and my favorite writers tend to be like that.

PL: I thought it was interesting that you decided to go to library school after you'd already received two writing degrees and had a book contract. The standard MFA career track would have suggested that you'd gone directly into teaching. Could you talk about that decision?

EM: I went to Iowa right out of college. It seemed really dangerous to become an academic. I wanted to live in the real world, at least for a while. I didn't like the idea of having to move someplace simply because that was where a job was offered. At the time I was only qualified for jobs in which I'd be teaching four sections of composition a semester. I object to the notion that the only worthwhile occupations for a writer are A: writing and B: teaching.

PL: And that those two things are necessarily braided.

EM: Right. First of all, many writers are simply not good teachers. The good ones often don't have to teach all the time, though, of course, there are exceptions to that. For myself at least, if I teach too much, I start to get burnt out. Academia is really nice, but it's not the real world.

PL: Let's talk about the novel. What was your inspiration for writing about James Sweatt, the tallest man in the world? Had you read something somewhere?

EM: My favorite book as a child was the *Guinness Book of World Records*. At one point I had huge portions of it memorized. I was especially fascinated with the story of Robert Wadlow, who actually grew to be eight-foot-one inches tall. A lot of his story found its way into my book, although he lived in Illinois, lived to be older, and grew to be taller. He did appear with the circus briefly.

PL: So you'd carried him around in your head for a long time.

EM: Right. And I'm quite short, less than five feet tall. Since my father's really tall, I definitely believe my height has shaped me. Even though I'm not always conscious of it, I've certainly always had a fascination with height and its extremes.

PL: Was most of your research culled from what you read about Wadlow?

EM: Most of it. I read old medical journals, and I also went through the *New York Times* during his appearance with the circus. I went through the index and read some of the newspaper coverage as the reporters followed him around the city.

PL: I think one of the most poignant scenes takes place in the shoe store in Hyannis, where Peggy, the narrator, undoes James's shoes to see that his feet have become swollen and misshapen. And it becomes clear to her that his brain has stopped registering physical pain.

EM: That was true of the tallest man in the world. He just lost feeling.

PL: Didn't that have something to do with the way he died?

EM: Right. He had an abrasion on his leg, and an infection set in, and nobody noticed.

PL: James's circus appearance as the tallest man in the world is interestingly handled in that another writer might have focused on James's exploitation. But he's in no way a victim. He wants to be in the circus. And the manager from the circus is in large part, a gracious host.

EM: As I was writing the book, I often thought about how people are terrified by those who look different. It's a very strange kind of terror. My mother, for instance, walks with canes, and there are people who won't talk directly to her when we're out together. They'll say to me, Tell her to be careful on the stairs. The assumption being that if you look different from the norm, there's also something wrong about the way you receive information.

PL: The resistance to that way of seeing seems to find its way into a lot of your writing. You have a story—"What We Know About the Lost Aztec Children"—in which the mother, in an effort to bury two former colleagues from the circus says, "I just want to show that they're not freaks." A lot of your work asserts the ordinariness of those who are typically perceived as other.

EM: I hope to eventually stop writing about that sort of thing, but that issue has been important to me.

PL: Although Peggy is speaking from the present, the novel is primarily a period piece. Was it difficult to write about something set in the 1950s? And could you talk about why so much of your work takes place in the past?

EM: Regarding the novel, one reason is that medical science has progressed to the point where nobody would be that tall now. There's therapy for people with overactive pituitary glands. In answer to the second part of your question, it used to be that I was very fond of writing about the past because my mother had talked so lovingly about her own childhood. There were so many details that seemed strange and wonderful to me, and I wanted to get those into my work. Another reason might be that when I was a fledgling writer, I hated that "write what you know" stuff. In college, many of my classmates wrote what they knew, though nobody, for the most part, had ever done anything at that age. The stories were really boring. And as a result I cheated by stealing my mother's background. I wrote a lot about Des Moines, where my mother was from. She was born in the '30s, and grew up in the '40s and '50s, and that took me up to the point where my mother was as old as I was. I could write about somebody whose age I'd been, while using the details of her background. I didn't write about growing up in the Boston suburbs for many years.

PL: I wondered whether writing a novel changed your way of seeing. Did the wider architecture of the novel allow you to risk more? I'm thinking about the Rocket Bride passages.

EM: I love writing things that are lyrical for no good reason. I like writing things that just—go. If you ask me what my favorite parts of the book are, they're all the paragraphs that lift off into space. And it's true you can do a lot more of that in a novel than you can in a short story.

PL: I love all the minor characters in the book, even the darker ones—Patty Flood, for instance, James's bom-again friend. Do you feel a special duty to present all your characters as balanced individuals?

EM: I do my best. Patty Flood was certainly somebody who got more complex in later drafts, though at first she was sort of a clueless, annoying person. But eventually I think it's more interesting if even the annoying characters are complex, and have an actual point of view. There's only one character in the book who I'd say is a bad person, and that's the doctor.

PL: But even though he's a bad person, he's still human. He's never vilified.

EM: Of course, I have a great weakness for minor characters.

PL: I never realized until I was putting my own novel together how integral minor characters can be to the fabric of a fictional world. I'm thinking about some of the small players in *Leaving Las Vegas*, the movie, at least. Remember the motel manager, the woman at the pool?

EM: Sure. Who's both so awful and lovely, both nice and cruel at the same time.

PL: Her presence reverberates throughout the movie. Minor characters can do so much to evoke the spirit of the world in which the major players move.

EM: I think that's completely true. In a general way, a good minor character can add tension to a scene when it isn't necessarily there between the two characters. It changes the whole structure of the relationship, if only briefly. In *Leaving Las Vegas* the dynamic between the man and the woman is changed once the motel manager steps in around the pool. And I'm sure it's possible to write a great novel with only two characters, but it's very, very difficult.

PL: It lends an authenticity. We move through a world of other people, and our daily lives are shaped in some part by our interactions with the letter carrier and the cashier at the A & P.

EM: When I'm out in the world I love coming back with those little stories. I call up my friend Rob all the time. For instance, there was this guy in MacDonald's who was fat and looked like a computer programmer, and was so delighted that there was a big sale on hamburgers that he began to announce it to the entire restaurant. Clearly he felt that they were fools for offering hamburgers at 29 cents, but it wasn't his fault, and he was going to take advantage of it, and he thought we all should, too.

PL: I wouldn't be surprised to see him turn up in something.

EM: That might be one of the reasons the smallest woman in the world is in the book. I thought it was time to write about somebody who was unmitigatedly delighted with life. Somebody who's sort of flirtatious and not hedging her bets. I thought, Somebody must apply a little levity to this.

PL: It seems to me that we're sometimes wary of writing about people who are delighted with life simply out of fear of seeming light or sentimental, when the fact is, there are more-or-less happy people in the world. It's false not to admit them into our work.

EM: I really think there's no way to get a real human being into a novel. Actual human beings are so much more complex than even the most complexly drawn character. They're so much more full of contradictions, and bad habits, and good habits, and the best intentions. They're too messy to get all on the page.

PL: The self is so fluid and complicated.

EM: And practically every human being I know is capable of saying firmly one thing one day, and believing it, and saying exactly the opposite the next day, and believing it just as much. If you have a character do that, it seems like they're flighty. But I just think that's the way people are. I don't think they're flighty; they just change their minds.

PL: The book is in many ways about Peggy's own personal struggle to define what love is apart from the societal expectation of someone of her age and upbringing. Could you talk about that?

EM: Clearly, at the beginning of the book she's an emotional coward. She's absolutely terrified of love, and believes she will love somebody once she's loved. She thinks that's the easy part. The hard part is finding somebody who will love her, and the easy part is loving somebody back. She thinks she's leaving the easy part for last, not realizing that it is also the hard part. I think by the end of the book she learns that love is not so easily defined as people would think it is. She learns to take some emotional risks.

PL: To be less passive?

EM: To learn to ask for what she wants. To be seen as someone who wants things, which has terrified her.

PL: I'd like to talk about process a bit. How do you write? What's your pattern?

EM: No discernible pattern. I don't write every day. My theory is that every writer is fascinated by talking to other writers about process because both believe that they're doing it wrong. And each also believes that they're the only one who's doing it correctly. I tend to binge write. At night.

PL: For a while you were head of circulation of the Somerville Public Library. Was it difficult to balance your writing life with a demanding, 40-hour-a-week job?

EM: When I was working at the library, I was mostly revising the novel. Half the book was already finished. One of the reasons I left was that I was about to start something new, and I couldn't

imagine how to go about doing that when A: I was working full time and B: being a boss. I found being a boss emotionally exhausting.

PL: Because you had to tell people what to do? To be responsible for them?

EM: Part of it was dealing with people who were pissed off at me both for good reasons and for my simple boss-ness. I don't think I was particularly a good boss, but in many respects I miss it. Surprisingly, working a full-time job wasn't that hard to balance with my writing.

PL: We've talked in the past about two types of writers—one who worries something to life inside his or her head for years and sits down to write the thing in a matter of months, and one who spends years making mistakes on the page before he or she gets it right. What kind of writer are you?

EM: I belong to the second category. When I envisioned this book, it was completely different. In fact, Peggy Cort was a very minor character. That only changed by the time I got to page 50 or so. Originally, I saw it as a three-part book, with more than one narrator. A lot of it was going to be about running the museum after the death of the world's tallest man. I could have thought about it forever, and it wasn't until I actually started writing the book that I realized it was going to be something quite different.

PL: You've said in the past that "first person narrators are a starting point for many writers." Do you always begin with a voice, or is it ever an image or an emotion?

EM: It used to be that I always started with a first line, and I'd generally know what the story would be about. I think first lines are vitally important. As far as voice goes, it's, truthfully, a lot of what fiction is about. And that doesn't mean it has to be a loud and wacky voice. I don't expect everything to be *Lolita*; I don't expect everything to have that incredible lushness and specificity, but to me voice is the soul of fiction. In many ways it's what keeps me reading after page one. It transmits the pressure of the work. There are other important elements to consider in a work of fiction, but when I pick up a novel and read the first page, what interests me are voice and language. There are perfectly decent writers I just don't appreciate because there's nothing to their language.

PL: There's a lot of fiction out there where the voice is affectless, turned down to the point of non-existence.

EM: Right, and as I said before, I really don't like reading work that could have been written by anybody. Cheever, for instance, who's one of my favorite writers, writes gorgeous prose. You don't think of it as "voicey" stuff, but there's a particularness. He's the only one who can write those sentences.

PL: Which novels do you come back to again and again?

EM: One of my favorites is Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country*. It's tremendous. It was given to me

four years ago by a friend, and I must have read it four times since. She's British. It's completely encyclopedic; there are lots and lots of characters. They're all very touching and odd. The language is beautiful. It covers a number of years. The plot is just sort of what happens, but there are millions of odd little characters in it. I love that novel, and I've never known anyone else besides my friend Paul who's read it.

PL: Anybody else?

EM: Cheever, of course. *Lolita*, perhaps my favorite book of all time. I like Carol Shields a lot—*The Stone Diaries*, and her earlier books, too. Alice Munro. Grace Paley.

PL: What about Flannery O'Connor? She seems to be floating about in your work.

EM: I love Flannery O'Connor. She's really amazing, because she writes about people you absolutely despise.

PL: But makes them absolutely human and sympathetic in some odd way.

EM: Right. Both the Misfit and the Grandmother. And Bobby Lee. Amazing characters.

PL: You were going to say something else?

EM: Salinger's *Nine Stories*. I reread that book a lot, though I was never a big *Catcher in the Rye* fan. Speaking of incredibly strange dialogue—"Do you like to chew candles?"

PL: What about newer or younger writers?

EM: I really like Gish Jen. Chris Offutt's *Kentucky Straight*. Katherine Dunn. Mary McGarry Morris. Pete Dexter. *The Virgin Suicides* by Jeffrey Eugenides. That's a book both heartbreaking and funny. There's this odd combination of distance and intimacy that works.

PL: What about extra-literary influences?

EM: Walt Kelly. Leiber and Stoller. Elvis, of course. Tattoo artists—I'd like to write something like tattoo art, a pastiche of a million things. When it comes to extra-literary influences, I'd love to be able to write something that makes somebody feel the way I feel when I hear Ella Fitzgerald sing "Miss Otis Regrets She's Unable to Lunch Today." It turns out that she can't have lunch with whoever's being addressed because she shot her lover the night before and the next morning she's hanged on a willow tree by a mob. It's both immensely strange—it's a Cole Porter song—and very touching. The way Ella Fitzgerald sings it is both funny and absolutely heartbreaking. It sort of does what every work of art should do: it's beautiful and entertaining and bizarre.

PL: Aside from your teachers, who has been influential to your development as a writer?

EM: I met Ann Patchett at the Work Center in 1990. We're each other's first reader. We send stuff back and forth; she sees it long before anybody else sees it. She's the person who tells me, This is foolishness! when I've been particularly foolish. She's also very good for me in that she suggests actual scenes to me. She's one of those writers who really knows what's going to happen in her books as she's writing them, and I

remember saying to her once, Well, how do you know that that's not the wrong choice? And she said, I figure it's like life. You make a choice, and that's the path you go down. I make the wrong choice frequently, but she has a real clarity of scene and plot. She wrote her first book when we were together in Provincetown. She gave me the first 100 pages, and I was absolutely blown away by them. Then she gave me a chapter at a time, and I really got to see how a novel was put together. It actually made me a lot less frightened of doing it. I thought, it can be done. I watched her do it, and there's this very fine novel at the end of it.

PL: Was there somebody else?

EM: The other isn't an individual, but a group of people, my family—especially my grandmother and my cousin Elizabeth. I came from a family where it wasn't weird to be an artist. My cousin is a dance teacher. Her son is a professional saxophonist, and his son is a professional drummer. There are lots of amateur artists in my family. It was an acceptable thing, not at all out of the ordinary. Some of my writer friends talk about what their parents have said to them about getting jobs. "Isn't it time to quit this foolishness?" Or "What will you do for money?"

PL: We get enough of that from the world.

EM: Right. It took me a long time before I even perceived it as support. And that has actually made a big difference to me. It never occurred to me not to write.

PL: If you weren't able to be a writer, what else would you want to be?

EM: I'd really like to be a big band singer, but I can barely carry a tune. The truth is, I'd be a librarian. I love public service. I love books, I love collections of anything. I think public librarians are the most undervalued public servants. People are always talking about how great schoolteachers are, which is absolutely true, while librarians are always depicted as shushing people. Some of the greatest public servants I've ever known have been reference librarians. There's such a generosity about their work, their being in there for the public good, enjoying the chase of information, giving things to people all day long. I miss having regular patrons. It always makes me sad when I see someone on the street in Somerville who says, "It's the lady from the library!" And I have to say back, "Not anymore." ■



Paul Lisicky recently completed a novel. His interview with Michael Cunningham appeared last year in Provincetown Arts.

Provincetown Arts Press



A Nonprofit Press
for Artists and Poets

PROVINCETOWN POETS SERIES

VOLUME I

Rival Heavens by Keith Althaus
\$10, paper, ISBN: 0-944854-06-0
\$35, cloth, ISBN: 0-944854-07-9

Frontispiece by Susan Baker

VOLUME II

1990 by Michael Klein
\$10, paper, ISBN: 0-944854-08-7
\$35, cloth, ISBN: 0-944854-09-5

Frontispiece by Bob Bailey

VOLUME III

Euphorbia by Anne-Marie Levine
\$10, paper, ISBN: 0-944854-11-7
\$28, cloth, ISBN: 0-944854-12-5

Frontispiece by Elise Asher

VOLUME IV

At The Gate by Martha Rhodes
\$10, paper, ISBN: 0-944854-18-4
\$35, cloth, ISBN: 0-944854-19-2

Frontispiece by Richard Baker

PROVINCETOWN ARTISTS SERIES

VOLUME I

Life Colors Art: Fifty years of Painting
by Peter Busa

Foreword by Bill Jensen

Introduction by Robert Metzger

Curator's Essay by Sandra Kraskin

Provincetown Art Association &
Museum exhibition catalog, 1992

\$20, paper, ISBN: 0-944854-05-2

VOLUME II

Narrative Art: Peter Hutchinson
in Retrospective

Essays by Brian O'Doherty
and Ann Wilson Lloyd

Provincetown Art Association &
Museum exhibition catalog, 1994

\$15, paper, ISBN: 0-944854-14-1

VOLUME III

Dissolving Clouds:
The Writings of Peter Hutchinson

\$15, paper, ISBN: 0-944854-15-X

\$50, cloth, ISBN: 0-944854-16-8

Frontispiece by Peter Hutchinson

Cloth editions are numbered and signed by the author and the artist. Please add \$3.00 per book for postage and handling; \$1.50 for each additional book.

PROVINCETOWN ARTS PRESS INC.

Box 35, 650 Commercial St., Provincetown, MA 02657

TEL: (508) 487-3167 • IN MASS: (800) 649-1155

Four Reasons to invest with us

- #1 Discounted commissions
- #2 Wide selection of products
- #3 Access to quality and unbiased research
- #4 100% owned by the Cape's largest commercial bank

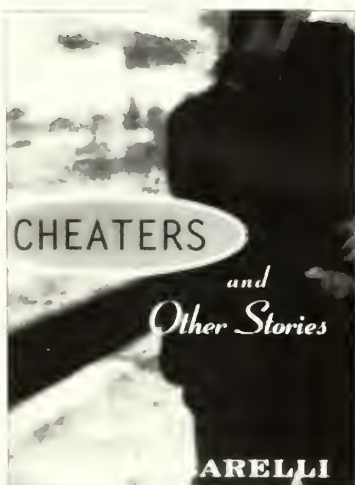
Join over 6,000 Cape Codders who have invested over \$300,000,000 with Cape Cod's leading brokerage and financial services firm.



1-800-742-4116
307 Main Street • Hyannis

A subsidiary of Cape Cod Bank & Trust Co.

Member NASD/SIPC. Securities in your account are protected up to \$500,000 by SIPC. CCB&T Investment Company is not a bank and its investment products are not backed or guaranteed by any bank nor are they FDIC insured. Mutual Funds are sold by prospectus only. Please be sure to obtain one and read it carefully before you invest.



THE DEBUT COLLECTION
BY A YOUNG WRITER
WHOSE STORIES HAVE
BEEN CALLED
"BRILLIANT"

BY

The New York Times Book Review
and *The Times (London)*

AT BOOKSTORES EVERYWHERE
ST. MARTIN'S PRESS

Confessions of an Ivy League Bookie: A True Tale of Love and the Vig

by Peter Alson

Crown

This book, a memoir, reads like a novel, and while that description might put one in mind of the kind of fictional nonfiction pioneered by the "new journalists" a half-generation ago—Capote, Mailer, Thompson, Wolfe—a genre in which the author performed in the event written about, Alson's book is really more akin to Fred Exley's *A Fan's Notes*, a confessional un-novel, or anti-novel, that adopts a novelistic approach to what is more a slice of reality than an event experienced for its literary opportunities. For Alson did not go into the dark world of bookmaking to write about it—though he had previously published participatory pieces (one about playing high-stakes poker) in *Esquire*, *Sports Illustrated*, and the *Village Voice*. This time it was a life choice, not a writing choice. He had reached a point, after years of furtively writing fiction, where he felt as if he might not have the imagination to create a fully believable character. Thus bookmaking became an activity, not to support his writing, but to replace it.

As his *Confessions* begins, Alson is returning to his hometown of New York following a winter in Provincetown where he had tried and failed yet again to write a novel and get over the woman, Anna, he had left behind in Chicago. With everyone else in the city escaping to the seaside, Alson, in debt and desperate, conducts a job search, but he is distracted by the heat of July and an invitation to spend a weekend in the Hamptons. Networking on the beach, he finds opportunities for more freelance writing, but he reasons: "Even if I got an assignment from *Esquire*, the piece would take at least a month to research and write. Then there would be the inevitable delays: editorial inertia, possible rewrites, footdragging by the purse-strings people, unforeseen black holes. Even if I was lucky all the way down the line, it would be months before I got paid."

He turns from the gamble of writing to gambling itself, accepting the offer of a job from a friend 10 years his junior who is raking in the dough as a bookmaker. The bookies work out of an office on St. Marks Place, taking illegal bets on sports Alson loves. The colorful people who parade the streets of the East Village are contrasted with the sordid souls whose lives he shares in the "office," an outer room in an aging hippie's apartment, agitated by ringing telephones. Alson answers his phone and records the amount and the odds placed by the disembodied voices crying for redemption through wishes of winning. Far away from his writing dreams and the protective womb of his Harvard education, Alson descends deeply into the shadow life of a small-time hood, performing well enough to create a future for himself in an operation which he says was not Mafia-controlled. Like Jean Genet, called a thief who there-

fore became a thief, Alson, ceasing to be a writer, becomes a "bookmaker." It is likely that the pun on Alson's desire to write, so natural that the irony remains embedded, has been translated by his unconscious. Indeed, much of the book feels, in its telling honesty and loving humor, to have risen unbidden from the unconscious.

In the realm of the bookmaker, Alson finds at last the democratic society he has been searching for, where no one will hold it against him that he has failed to reach his potential. As in real love, Alson's flaws are recognized but accepted. One of Alson's bookie pals provides this self-assessment near the end: "Look who we got here. We got one guy, Spanky, who's a fat, smelly slob with a bad attitude. We got another, Michael, who's deeply depressed and doesn't know it. We got Monkey, a gangster who kills people. We got Eddie, a drugged-out loser who needs to boss people around. Bernie, a 50-year-old man who can't walk 10 feet without stopping to catch his breath. And Pat. I don't even know what Pat's problem is because he's always so busy blaming it on somebody else."

For those interested in the details of bookmaking, Alson's book is a primer, with definitions of terms and strategies of betting artfully illustrated. All the while, a pin-prick sharp dialogue skewers the self-esteem of the author even as it elevates his lowlife friends to the humanity they come to deserve through the attention they receive. Their pain is Alson's pain. They, remaining themselves, become aspects of his ego. We feel for them, and we cheer Alson as he grows like a flower in the muck. But then a fatal blow is delivered to him by his ex-girlfriend, with whom he keeps a running commentary about his open wounds over their breakup. She confesses before a long-awaited visit that she has just slept with someone else:

"You really did it?"

"Oh, Pete."

"No, it's fine. I just can't believe the timing. I mean since you're seeing me in a week."

I could hear her breathing, groping for the right response. "Ugh, I hate this," she said finally. "I hate hurting you."

Alson's complicated rite of passage, through troubled love and guilty work, carries a subtext in his burden of being Norman Mailer's nephew. Mailer once said that going to Harvard had a danger in that it might end up being the best thing one ever did. A greater challenge for Alson was that he embodied and carried in his blood the lineage of the tough guy, the Maileresque hero with the large voice who spoke for a generation, the short man with the Napoleonic imagination, the Picasso of the written word whose portraits of women terrified and excited them. It might have been Alson who contributed the title phrasing for his uncle's novel *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, a gift that would also be a statement about literary influence. In defining the tough guy retroactively as a frustrated lover and a frustrated writer, Alson would be pointing to a postmodern revenge of the non-heroic male, measuring himself against the tough guys he has surrounded himself with. Compared to

them, he is not so bad after all. This is true even when our would-be hero is finally exposed, standing before the judge who intones the name of his university, Harvard, "pronouncing it with particular ostentation," and who makes him, filthy and sleepless from a night in the House of Detention, squirm with the knowledge that he squandered advantages not available to the usual crooks who were educated on mean streets where no weed grew and where ivy was unimaginable.

"Why is gambling worse than any other means of acquiring money?" Dostoyevsky asked. It is worse because, as the wise guys like to say, money won is twice as sweet as money earned. That is the risk and reward. Alson takes this question for his epigraph, and it drives his book. Writing and gambling may be related. "Professional gamblers—even those who gambled legally," Alson writes, "had an outlaw mentality. They were people who had chosen to live their lives outside the socially accepted boundaries, to thumb their noses at the world. I found much to admire in that." Indeed, Alson respects the sharpies who have proven over time that they can make winning bets and compares them to the wizards who play the stock market. Perhaps it is writers to whom the comparison should be drawn. Who knows where Alson would have ended up if he had not been arrested in a raid by the police? The proof of his redemptive gamble in resuming writing is the hard evidence of his book.

—CHRISTOPHER BUSA

Christopher Busa reviewed Norman Mailer's new biography of Picasso elsewhere in this issue.

East Justice

by Melanie Braverman
The Permanent Press

East Justice introduces us to Grace, Braverman's main character, whose story is a quilted retrospective of her journey through life. The fabric of this quilt owes more to memory than memoir, as the narrator directs our attention from the context of a young adult life. This vantage point provides Braverman with a difficult task. She must give her narrator a retrospective voice and discernment which is an authentic outgrowth of the life experience the reader has been invited to share. For the most part Braverman achieves this credibility for her character. Part of her success is to avoid the notion of plot as imperative to the telling of a story.

Braverman began her writing career as a poet. She found her poetic voice while exploring the outer edges of the genre, and discovered herself as a language poet. In *East Justice*, Braverman gives us a novel that skims the outer edge of its genre. Every genre has its formal gravity which provides cohesion around a core. This core is broadly accepted as the form which defines the genre. Forms which deviate from the norm run the risk of being perceived as not belonging to the genre or being, at best, second cousins thrice removed. Braverman takes a risk in *East Justice*

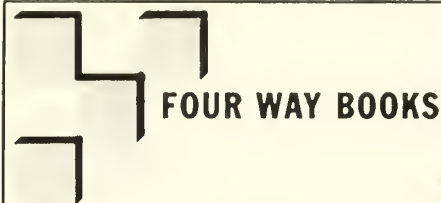
and gives us a novel that eschews pedigree but insists that it runs with the pack.

As readers we are asked to contend with a novel that is driven not by plot but by contextual experience filtered through the emotional distance of retrospective memory. To meet her end of the reader/writer bargain, Braverman has created a truly authentic narrator. In her insistence that her narrator be authentic, Braverman accepts a certain unevenness and, at times, self-consciousness in Grace's presentation of her reality. Memory is, after all, something which is both refined and acknowledged over time. The depth and detail through which we describe our memories is related to the emotional and developmental maturity of the one who is remembering as well as to the content of what is being remembered. From her young adult's view, Braverman's Grace presents her childhood relationships with a style that belies the examined and integrated places they have formed in her sense of self. This more "traditional" style anchors one end of Braverman's aesthetic. The other is experienced through Grace's presentation of her more recent memory, which is comparatively more vulnerable and distanced from direct interpretation. This is made evident stylistically in Braverman's poetic voice, the vehicle Grace uses most comfortably to explore her recent memory.

It is the constellation of Grace's childhood relationships, most notably that with her grandmother, which form the backbone of both the novel and of our response to Grace as an authentic character. Through these relationships, we ally ourselves with a young Jewish girl growing up in a small midwestern town in the middle of nowhere special. We share Grace's realization that in order to embrace the wholeness she desires within herself, she must learn to mediate the concentric spheres of influence that radiate through her life. She must allow herself to be pulled by each and not be subsumed by any.

Grace is not a nice neat character, shrink-wrapped to keep her fresh while she's picked over and examined by the critical eye of the reader. It's clear that she's going to continue stitching on her quilt whether we turn the page or not. It becomes quickly apparent that steadfastness is Grace's strong suit. What puts the page turning in question is also that thing that makes the story formally unique. *East Justice* chronicles the musings of Grace and is entirely authentic to the whole of that process. It includes digressions, associations, temporal and emotional leaps. It presents differing levels of integration and differing stances toward the material presented.

East Justice is best read as a novel which stretches to fill the midwestern landscape it presents: acres of green sprung from rolling hills, the presence of abundant sky. It is not a novel of containment but rather of acceptance and embrace. In *East Justice*, Braverman has sown a field which should prove fertile and productive for many harvests, the raising up of oneself through what we call living, the memory of oneself through what we call life. It is a beginning neither humble nor congratulatory but ripe with



FOUR WAY BOOKS

New Poetry 1996

THE TENSION ZONE

• Sarah Gorham

Co-winner of the Four Way Award Series

Selected by Heather McHugh

\$11.95 1-884800-06-8 paper, 72 pgs

FUNERAL PIE

• Stuart Friebert

Co-winner of the Four Way Award Series

Selected by Heather McHugh

\$11.95 1-884800-07-6 paper, 72 pgs

BE PROPERLY SCARED

• M. Wyrebeck

Winner of the Four Way Intro Series

Selected by Gregory Orr

\$11.95 1-884800-08-4 paper, 72 pgs

WHOLE SKY

• Pamela Kircher

\$11.95 1-884800-10-6 paper, 72 pgs

THREE FLIGHTS UP

• Beth Stahlecker

With an afterword by Ellen Bryant Voigt

\$11.95 1-884800-04-1 paper, 64 pgs

THE FOUR WAY READER #1

an anthology of poetry & short fiction

Edited by Jane Brox, Dzvinia Orlowsky,
Martha Rhodes

\$14.95 1-884800-00-9 paper, 220 pgs

Books are available through Grolier Poetry Book Shop

6 Plympton St., Cambridge, MA 02138

1-800-234-POEM or 617-547-4648.

Fax 617-547-4230

Major credit cards accepted.

You may also order through the publisher.

Add \$3.00 shipping per book. \$5.00 each additional. MA residents add sales tax.

(Sorry, no credit cards.) Make check or money order payable to Four Way Books.

Mail to: Order Dept., Four Way Books,
PO Box 607, Marshfield MA 02050.

Write for our complete catalog!

Provincetown Arts Press



A Nonprofit Press
for Artists and Poets
Forthcoming 1996

PROVINCETOWN POETS SERIES

Full-length collections by poets with individual voices who have not published a first book.

■ Volume V 1996

ON HER FACE THE LIGHT OF LA LUNA BY MARIYM CRUZ-BERNAL

Frontispiece by Michelle Weinberg de Pereyra

\$10 paper, ISBN: 0944854-22-2

\$35 cloth, ISBN: 0944854-23-0

Mariym Cruz-Bernal is a native of Puerto Rico and a graduate of the MFA Program in Writing at Vermont College. She is the author of a book of poems written in Spanish, *Poemas para no morir*, and the translator, with Deborah Digges, of *Ballad of the Blood* by Maria Elena Cruz Varela (AThe Ecco Press, 1995). Her poems in English have appeared in *The American Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, and *Provincetown Arts*. She lives in Puerto Rico and is the mother of two small children.

"In the last years of the 20th century it seems to me that poetry has become fearful, and poets will not come out from behind their work. Some of us wear the masks of dead gods. We lean against monuments and with our fingers trace the epitaphs, piece together fragments and call them poems. Those of us who are obliged to be political rant and rant, but this can be another form of hiding. And oh, the tired third person, ourselves cast as others! I am grateful to Mariym Cruz Bernal whose magical lyric opens, full faced, on a life entire." —DEBORAH DIGGES *BOSTON REVIEW*

PROVINCETOWN ARTISTS SERIES

Writings by artists and monographs on distinguished older artists whose careers have not been summarized in a comprehensive catalogue

■ Volume IV 1996

JOURNALS OF MYRON STOUT

Edited by Christopher Busa

Essays by B.H. Friedman, Henry Geldzahler, and Sanford Schwartz.
Chronology. Bibliography.

Frontispiece by Myron Stout

\$15 paper, ISBN: 0-944854-28-1

\$50 cloth, ISBN: 0-944854-29-X

Myron Stout, who died in 1987, was a distinguished painter who moved year-round to Provincetown in 1952. While painting, for 20 years he kept a meticulous journal in which he explored and revised his thoughts about painting and painters, both living and long dead. The Whitney Museum published excerpts from these journals in the exhibition catalogue that accompanied the artist's retrospective there in 1980, the major recognition of his career, occurring when he was disabled with blindness (described in the journals). The entire manuscript deserves comparison with the classics of writing by artists, including Delacroix's *Journals* and Van Gogh's *Letters*. The curator of the Whitney retrospective, Sanford Schwartz, wrote that Stout "takes for granted that he can say exactly what he wants to say, and this gives his prose a flowing ease. Always articulate, frequently eloquent his sentences and thoughts come to him as complete, balanced, effortlessly many-claused entities."

PROVINCETOWN ARTS PRESS INC.

Box 35, 650 Commercial St., Provincetown, MA 02657
TEL (508) 487-3167 • IN MASS (800) 649-1155

the offering of a girl named Grace, a person who, by the end of the book, you are glad you took the time to get to know. —KATE CARTER

Kate Carter is a poet and sculptor living in Eastham.

Atlantis

by Mark Doty

HarperCollins

A few years ago, on an unseasonably warm day in late February, my mother and I drove to the Long Island Sound. The beach we walked on was deserted, excepting the two of us and several dozen seagulls. It was very close to still and too many hues to count of gray and beige. Eventually, we came upon a length of ice running parallel to the shoreline, like some perfectly preserved, prehistoric spine; massive, opaque in some places and translucent in others. I had to stop and kneel and look and when I did I realized it was melting. But melting from within. Deep inside the ice, water bubbled and crenelated, tunneling clear to the surface where it leaked through pores and pooled into shallows of sand. Rising to look down its length, the spine now appeared to be moving, stretching its vertebrae in preparation for a languorous return to the sea. I remember what I felt then: awe, knowing for the first time what it meant, "to thaw"; shame, for having used the verb so freely before I'd actually understood it; then fear, that if I moved away I would lose it, lose the thaw just as I had begun to seize it (or it, me). Finally, though, as I walked its length and left it behind, what I felt more than anything else was a welling up of gratitude for the gifts bestowed upon us when we look into the world.

I have had the opportunity to hear Mark Doty speak about poetry. I was impressed less with the extent of his knowledge, which is formidable, than by the quality of it. He seemed to have grappled with poems in the realm of the senses as well as of the intellect; chewed on syntax, tasted the end of a line, held images up to the light, shaken a stanza and listened for the stirring within. Having read *Atlantis*, Doty's most recent collection of poetry (written during and after his lover of 12 years was stricken with AIDS), I must conclude that this is also how he has lived. His intelligence—rigorous, visceral—is evident in every poem. He privileges the reader with his discoveries, and moreover—bespeaking a rare graciousness—with the struggles from whence they came.

It is possible to cite influences on this work: Keats's lush, exalting melancholy; Rilke's impassioned questions and the answers he posits when the Angel remains silent; Bishop's cooler, but no less revelatory, cataloguing of the world. Yet Doty's manner of attention is singular. He takes up where the others have left off, in form, image, tone. The first poem in *Atlantis*, "Description," introduces both the task of the poems that follow and the predominant images and tactics to be employed.

My salt marsh
—mine, I call it, because
these day- hammered fields

of dazzled horizontals
undulate, summers,
inside me and out—

how can I say what it is?
Sea lavender shivers
over the tidewater steel.

... the bud of storm loosens:
watered paint poured

dark blue onto the edge
of the page. Haloed grasses,
gilt shadow -edged body of dune ...

I could go on like this.
I love the language
of the day's ten thousand aspects.

Throughout *Atlantis* we enter and reenter these images—water, light, bloom, paint, metal—of a world that *makes* itself, and of a language that painstakingly forges acknowledgment.

But I'm not so sure it's true,
what I was taught, that *through*
the particular's the way

to the universal:
what I need to tell is
swell and curve, shift

and blur of boundary,
tremble and spilling over,
a heady purity distilled

from detail ...

There is a sense here that the particular is the universal. The surface of the world—elaborately wrought, yet somehow also mobile, transitory—is reflected in the surface of Doty's poems. Each time an image recurs, it is distilled again, another facet cut and polished, another vein revealed until, reading on, we begin to feel much as one does by the ocean: a return to something so old that we know it in our pulse, in our bones. And yet we are never completely lulled by it, because each wave, each ripple offers another synonym for "beyond." Thus the poet's task:

What is description, after all,
but encoded desire?

And if we *say*
the marsh, if we forge
terms for it, then isn't it

contained in us,
a little,
the brightness?

On a formal level, "Description" offers examples of some of the more frequent characteristics of Doty's poems: short lines and stanzas in tercet or couplet, the progressive listing of images and adjectives, a perfect pitch of near or internal rhyme ("what I need to tell is / swell and curve, shift // and blur of boundary"), the use of punctuation (notably of commas and dashes) and line breaks, all of which create the distinct momentum of the poem. As fluid as these poems are, as much as they *surge*, they never leave the reader behind. Instead, a line break, a comma will pause that rushing forward for a moment. And in the ellipse, we have the feeling of being immediately inside Doty's struggle to describe and thus contain. We experience both the doggedness and the spontaneity of meditation. Yet, rereading, we are startled by the artfulness of its (re)construction. These, we realize, are seamlessly crafted distillations.

I've tried to convey the *how* of these poems. But *what*, exactly, is being told? In an interview published in this magazine two years ago, Doty spoke of writing about one's experience, first directly and then indirectly, when "we have to meet ourselves through other things. We need vehicles in order to encounter who and what we are." These poems comprise the self portrait of a man who is in, with, and at a loss. And they are most revelatory when they focus on the world around him. In "Fog Argument," for example, he trains his eye on a cluster of beach roses. "What are they, the white roses, / when they are almost nothing, / only a little denser than the fog, // shadow-centered petals blurring, / toward the edges, into everything?"

From the outset, there is a sense of simultaneous dissolution and union, and the need of the poet to resolve these seemingly disparate movements. The roses are almost nothing but becoming everything. Temporary, fragile, and yet "brave, / waxen candles," they catalyze both the recognition that resolution will not be achieved, and an articulation of the desire to take comfort in that fact: "And we talk / as if death were a line to be crossed. / Look at them, the white roses. / Tell me where they end."

Perhaps the most striking quality of these poems is that juxtaposing of grief's movements so closely that they become synchronous. The most resonant metaphor continues to be the sea: living and dying, entering and receding, humor and melancholy, elegy and ode. In "Wreck," about a drowned trawler, Doty writes: "...something must hold, / some chambered wreck / must fill and empty daily, / seawater pouring like the future / —I need this evidence— / into the hulk which admits / and releases and keeps / its grip on the shore."

Bodies in the world—fleeting, tossed, subject to the give and take of the tide—must be sustained in a poetry which echoes that tide, formally and thematically. Those poems which confront the self more directly are sometimes less accessible. In "Grosse Fuge," employing longer lines and movements or cantos more than stanzas, Doty's skill in making language is no less apparent. In addition, there is the inclusion

of a powerful narrative—the first person voice of a friend who is close to losing his battle with AIDS. Alternating with that voice is Doty's struggle to understand—"learning to *hear*"—Beethoven's late quartets. The images, as usual, are stunning. But they seem to build a crescendo of abstraction, each image—as in a stream of consciousness—seeking to connect with and illuminate the next; October lilacs to Bobby (the ailing friend) to Beethoven to an MRI screen, chestnuts, autumn, Sanskrit. It is, however, difficult to fault a poet who so generously admits his own limitations, who integrates limit with the project of attending to the limitless. "I can't keep any of it / separate for long," he writes, and later: "All my work of listening, / and have I only learned that Beethoven / could see the forest *and* the trees?" The problem of such a poem may lie precisely therein. For the most part, Doty directs a question or statement toward a single tree—the roses, for instance—and in the process of refinement, the forest is manifest. In "Grosse Fuge," there seems to be an attempt to encompass the entire vista at once, and the sheer breadth of it is impossible to contain. "Where can the poem end? / What can you expect, in a world that blooms / and freezes all at once? / There is no resolution in the fuge."

There are so many poems in *Atlantis* that merit a closer look than I am capable of giving here. "Couture," in two parts, is one in which first the gowns and draperies in the paintings of the Old Masters refer "not to heaven / but to

pleasure's // textures," and then autumn leaves are compared to Faberge eggs, to haute couture, finally to a "... grand old drag / in torched and tumbled chiffon / striking her weary pose. // Talk about your mellow / fruitfulness! Smoky alto, / thou hast thy music, // too: unforgettable"

These tragicomic odes to desire appear in the midst of Doty's elegiac meditations on loss. Throughout the collection, while formal patterns evolve and diverge, while language is made, dismantled, remade, while we follow the poet through every step of his inquiry, we are buoyed by a constant force of redemption. "Love is a contract with loss," Doty stated in the interview cited earlier. Yes, and there's no doubt that it is worth it. Few works of literature grant us the kind of tactile enlightenment that life in its brutal and gorgeous complexity does. As Doty writes in his recently published book of memoirs, *Heaven's Coast*, a prose mediation on loss and its aftermath: "The world doesn't need us to continue, although it does need us to attend, to study, to name. We are elements of the world's consciousness of itself, and thus we are necessary: replaceable and irreplaceable at once." In the admirable struggle to describe—in every sense of the word—his world, Mark Doty has left, "contained in us, a little, the brightness." I, for one, am grateful.

—CORDELIA LAWTON

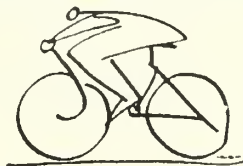
Cordelia Lawton, a recent graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, is presently at work on a novel.

Far Side of the Wind

Crystal • Jewelry • Arts • Crafts
Tapes • Books • Spiritual Readings
Wind Chimes
Native American Artifacts

389 Commercial St., Provincetown, MA 02657
(508) 487-3963
Brookline, MA • (617) 277-8991

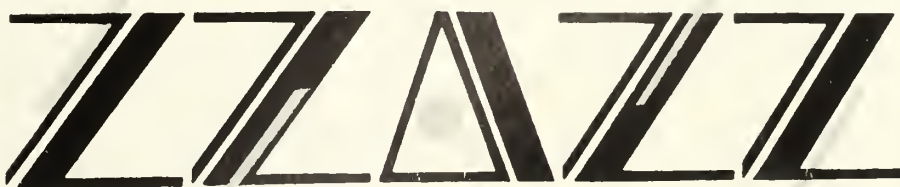
sales • rentals • service



PTOWN BIKES

Mongoose Bikes

42 Bradford Street Downtown Rentals
(next to the community center) 306 Commercial St.
487-TREK 487-6718



T H E A R T O F D R E S S I N G
M E N • W O M E N

296 COMMERCIAL ST. / PROVINCETOWN / MASS. 02657 / 508-487-4644

THANKS
FOR THE
ARTS THAT
ENRICH
AND ADD
INTEREST TO
OUR LIVES.



SEAMEN'S BANK
MEMBER FDIC

Provincetown
Wellfleet ■ North Truro

ALAN DODGE
ARCHITECT

ARCHITECTURE
INTERIOR DESIGN
SITE PLANNING

P. O. BOX 242, RTE. 6
SOUTH WELFLEET, MA 02663
PHONE: (508) 349-7672

INTERNET TRAVEL, INC.

\$200-\$500 WEEKLY

Mailing travel brochures. No
experience necessary. For information
send a self-addressed stamped
envelope to: Internet Travel, P.O. Box
680610, Miami, FL 33268

Remembering William Carlos Williams

by James Laughlin

New Directions

When Yvor Winters wrote in 1926 that William Carlos Williams was, along with Mina Loy, "one of the two living poets who have the most, perhaps, to offer the younger American writers," few poets, let alone a general reading public, would have had the knowledge or insight to concur: the classical literary ruins of T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" cast a deep shadow over the scene. But to Williams, Eliot had "returned us to the classroom just at the moment when I felt that we were at the point of an escape to matters much closer to the essence of a new art form itself—rooted in the locality which should give it fruit." By the 1950s American poets like Charles Olson and Robert Creeley had caught up with Winters's prescience, rejecting Eliot's autumnal announcement that the era of poetic experimentation had ended, and built on Williams's (sometimes murky) ideas of variable feet and organic form. The extent of Williams's influence is by now as irrefutable as was Eliot's on the earlier generation of modernists; it is manifested in a body of work inspiring the endlessly pedestrian as well as the brilliant, and has given rise to many of the shelves in literary academia. While the book before me will now join those studies, it will no doubt remain distinct from them, inhabiting a strange region in its combination of criticism, memoir, biography, and poetry.

James Laughlin met Williams in 1936. Laughlin, a self-described "22-year-old neophyte" who inherited a fortune and wanted to make good with it, had started New Directions Press with the encouragement and tutelary overseeing of Ezra Pound. Williams was a poet desperate for a steady publisher—he had published his first five books himself, and the first commercial publisher he finally found went bankrupt. When Williams decided to hand over his novel, *White Mule*, and give Laughlin a chance to prove himself, he addressed the Harvard sophomore in a letter as "Dear God," and a life-long friendship commenced.

Laughlin gives us a portrait of Williams at times deftly insightful (as with his description of the psychic necessity that drove Williams's late theorizing on prosody), at times apologetic (as he is with Williams's many illicit affairs), but always sympathetically drawn with a careful mixture of human warmth and respectful distance towards the great poet's complicated and conflicted person. As well as a memoir, the book is a kind of homage, in technique, to the work of Williams and another of Laughlin's mentors, Kenneth Rexroth, himself an admirer of Williams' poetry. Laughlin claims to have adopted his metric from a long poem, *The Dragon and the Unicorn*, in which Rexroth spins a limpid free verse line organized around three to four beats—a relaxed, almost transparent movement of meditative prose, lineated with just enough *condesare*

and verbal current in the breaks to flex poetic muscle. Laughlin's use of the measure is more prosaic, but it allows him to lay down a line with the speed and surprise of verse, while staying absolutely true to his own sense of phrasing and conversational voice:

On a later visit to 9 Ridge Road
Bill walked me up the hill back
Of his house. From the top there
Was a wide and open view across
The wetlands to the skyscrapers
Of Manhattan which rose like
White flowers through the haze.

Description that is matter-of-fact, physical, combining urban and natural imagery, and that uses the line to build up and delay detail, pays tribute to the grammatically loosened "triadic line" of Williams's late work, in addition to the more obvious borrowing from Rexroth. Its effects, as in much free verse—particularly Williams's—depends on the poem being read, not heard; the poem relies on the reader's visual apprehension of how the sentence wraps around the measure.

Laughlin succeeds similarly in highlighting Williams's influence on the diction and lineation of American poetry by quietly demonstrating it in his own work. In a passage on Williams's growing sense that America had its own language to bring to poetry, Laughlin writes that

Since 1913 Bill had been feeling
His way, struggling, toward an
American idiom for poetry, a
Style built from American speech
And the sense of American locality.
The powerful impact of Eliot's
Anglo-francophile verse bowled
Him over . . .

"Bowled / Him over" captures precisely the sense of idiom, as "feeling / His way" suggests Williams's initially tentative, then increasingly bold experimentation.

That search reached its peak in the composition of *Paterson*, the long poem in which Williams conceived the arc of one man's achievement as expressed in the life of a city and the flow of a river—sites for a mixing of history, culture, and language:

For his symbol Bill took the
Passaic River as it follows its
Course down to the sea. He felt
That his life was like that
Of the river. At first he
Worried about the verse,
Then let the form take
Care of itself, permitting
Colloquial language to set the
Pace, flowing easily as
The river flowed.

Laughlin's mimesis here is a double one, expressing in its easy verse movement some of the "flow" Williams brought into his poem prosodi-

cally and figuratively. Is there a better kind of practical criticism?

Even those familiar with much of the critical writing on *Paterson* will learn something here. We discover, for example, just how collaborative the project was between the poet and the printer whom Laughlin finally found to do the job—a man who could respond enthusiastically with his own technical expertise to Williams's use of "broken / lines, short lines mixed with / long lines, variations in / Vertical spacing, in short / a page where the type would float free."

Such insight could only come from one intimately involved with the mechanical production of a book, and the printer's knowledge complements Laughlin's natural affinity for understanding Williams's poetic development:

He went on to become the best
Line-breaker of his time; i.e.
He had the most sensitive ear
For judging which word should
End a line and how the syntax
Should turn against the flow
Of lines, which is the skill
That shapes free verse and gives
It organic form.

This sensitivity led Williams to the invention, in his late work, of the "triadic line," "a step-down / Line of medium length divided / Into three roughly equal parts, / Beginning at the left margin / And cascading gently down to / The right over a series of / Evenly spaced indentations." As in:

Of asphodel, that greeny flower
like a buttercup
upon its branching stem—

Although much has been written about it, Laughlin adds the priceless detail that Williams arrived at this innovation through the use of a modern typewriter: presented to him by the doctors at the hospital where he could no longer practice as a doctor due to the strokes he had suffered, Williams was able to set the typewriter stops for the three indents of the "triadic line" "and save the / Bother of trying to get the / Alignment with his shaky hand."

Laughlin deepens these human as well as textual insights through the book's documentary presentation of photographs, facsimiles of book covers, and excerpts from letters, stories, poems, and a memoir-in-progress by one of Williams's sons. Such sources greatly enhance the dimensions of Laughlin's recollection, particularly in the case of Williams's defection from New Directions as sole publisher of his work—a bruise that healed over time and that Laughlin documents and examines passionately, even to the point of subtly gloating over the demise and death of the scamming David McDowell, who preyed on Williams' fears over sales in order to persuade him to join the stables at Random House.

Despite the inclusion of documentary material, one is nonetheless compelled to quibble with some of Laughlin's historical assertions: it was probably Mallarmé's "Un Coup de dés" and the pre-war futurists who set the example for Williams of how typographical innovation might be used in *Paterson*, not the post-war of dadaists and the subsequent surrealists, as Laughlin suggests. Likewise, when one reads that Allen Ginsberg, who had grown up in Paterson,

... persists in denying my
Anecdote that he became Bill's
Friend by leaving his poems
In the Williams' milk bottles,
But some myths are too good,
Too mythic, to be suppressed

one wonders, "Well which is it? There's no getting around an acknowledgement that memory bent towards myth-making stands in the service of Laughlin's own memorial—a backlist that comprises one of the greatest and most successful publishing ventures of the 20th century—but myth-making makes for lousy literary history. Other legendizing sprigs similarly garnish Laughlin's account like plastic grass decorating a plate of sushi. No one would mistake them for food though. They are easily enough picked out, and do little finally to damage a charming and informative work.—JOSHUA WEINER

Joshua Weiner's poems and essays have appeared in The Nation, American Scholar, Threepenny Review, and Boston Review, among others. He was a 1993-94 fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center.

Burnt Offerings

by Timothy Liu
Copper Canyon Press

Timothy Liu's second collection of poetry, *Burnt Offerings*, is well-titled. Essential to his impulse is a willingness to sacrifice, to surrender, to give away in order to touch the world and to be touched by the world. His world is, in his phrase, "made out of absence." In our current culture of simplistic self-commodification, Liu's poetry possesses a particularity like "buzzards / lodged in pines with evening in their wings" and a passionate openness to take a "flower and thrust it / all the way into my mouth."

His conversational tone is heightened with impersonality. He creates metaphysical tensions between material life and an egoless, other-centered mental life. Some readers may be startled by Liu's unashamed affection for the details of his erotic experience: "I hummed a tune to calm him down, unzipping / his pants in order to rescue his penis / from a house on fire." Another poem about the size of his Asian penis is funny and forgiving. At the end of "Reading Whitman in a Toilet Stall," Liu says, "we walk out of our secrets into the world," recalling the last line of

THE IRONMONGERS

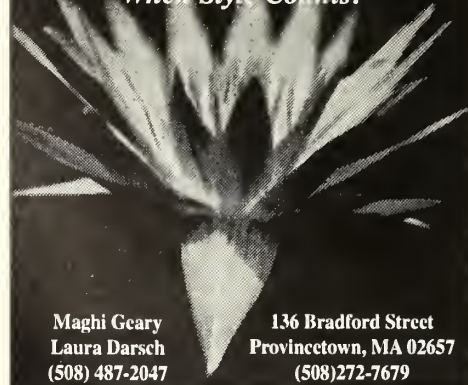
ANTIQUES • BOOKS • JEWELRY



419 COMMERCIAL STREET 487-3365

The Provincetown Florist

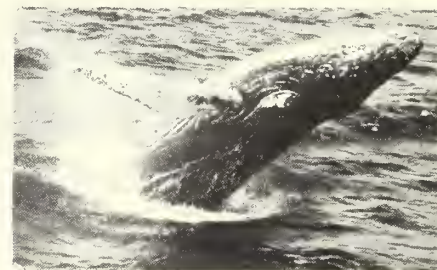
"When Style Counts!"



Maghi Geary
Laura Darsch
(508) 487-2047

136 Bradford Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
(508) 272-7679

WHALE WATCH Dolphin Fleet OF PROVINCETOWN



The originators of whalewatching on the east coast, the Dolphin Fleet is the largest and most experienced fleet in the country.

By sailing on the Dolphin boats, you will have access to the internationally-known scientists from the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown. They will be aboard to guide every cruise and answer questions about whales and whale research, as well as collect scientific data.

3 trips daily leaving from MacMillan Pier
including Sunset Cruise

Call toll-free USA & Canada: 1-800-826-9300
or from the Lower Cape: 349-1900

Studio Gallery Office or Home



Call me to discuss financing.
Barbara Carreiro
349-3711



Wellfleet Office
Main Street



Cape Cod's Community Bank Since 1855.

PINE POINT CO. LANDSCAPE

- Environmental Design
- Formal Design
- Landscape Construction
- Maintenance Gardening
- Erosion Control
- Complete Tree Service



Frank Corbin, MCLP
Wellfleet, MA

349-6770

Hart Crane's poem, "Legends," which steps with "the legend of [one's] youth into the noon."

Our current cultural moment has been called "conservative," and it probably is. The value of the articulation (and imaginative exploration) of erotic experience is questionable again: some would say that the presence of *eros* in poetry is narcissistic display. In Liu's poetry the erotic is essential to both the surface of the poem and its depths, so essential that it becomes "unreflecting," to quote Keats, an energy that bonds the speaker to others and to the world. A poem such as "White Moths," in which "the bronzed backs / of men in the park" are adorned with "pale wings / fanning a glitter of dust," shows us that Liu desires to speak humbly, guilelessly, and from *within* existence, and succeeds in doing so.

The psychic risk which is the price for an undefended and vibrant existence is explored fully in the long poem "With Chaos in Each Kiss." The speaker's love for his partner, a musician, is enriched by pain until the "song slowly composing itself inside [his] body" becomes "the voice / of sadness that is always singing / beneath the visible." He acknowledges that "only love can make us visible," that "without fear, love would lie still," and the sanity of this particular relationship is disclosed when we are shown that his lover is also one who must "deny [his] own face."

Technically, Liu's poetry gains a great deal from his alert comfort with silence. His brief poems are among his best, using implication, nuance, and juxtaposition to convey a compact range. In eight lines, "Manifest Destiny" brings together imperialism, Christianity, the Holocaust, and the tragedy of capitalism:

The gods of this new world
have no honor. A parrot shouts

Christ, perched on a widow's porch,
while dozens of its kind

are shoveled into a furnace. *Christ*.
A whistle blows its plume of smoke

across the land, train after train
pulling out of the empty stations.

The well-timed repetition of "*Christ*" gives the poem a dramatic fullness of voice. The subtle, yet clear relationships between the details make the poem more than a kaleidoscopic fragment.

Liu often employs a clipped syntax, sometimes creating a kind of ambiguous half-question by beginning an incomplete sentence with the word "How." As in the poetry of Linda Gregg and Jack Gilbert, where similarly staccato sentence patterns result in a powerful stasis, Liu's undefeatedly supple rhythms offer a dynamic engagement with life. —CHRISTOPHER DAVIS

Christopher Davis's first book won the AWP Award in 1988 and his second collection, A Silent War, is circulating in manuscript. He teaches creative writing at UNC Charlotte.



Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man: An Interpretive Biography

by Norman Mailer
Atlantic Monthly Press

Stocky, powerful, and libidinous, he was also short, cowardly, and fearful. A rough chunk of primal matter, with dark zones of energy drawn around his eyes, he mesmerized women. He mesmerized men. For the artists who came of age during the '30s and '40s, Norman Mailer's generation, Picasso was God. Mailer witnessed this homage and absorbed it, eventually signing a contract in 1962 to write a biography of the artist and spending some weeks with Picasso's *oeuvre* in reproduction and two more months writing a series of self-interviews. These inquiries were essentially dialogues between self and soul about the violent act of creating artistic forms.

Published in 1966 as a 200-page conclusion to *Cannibals and Christians*, a collection of occasional pieces, the writing was all the more extravagant for being in the bastard form of journalistic Q & A. Mailer explored his key ideas through the dynamic of an interrogator who was at once sympathetic and hostile, pushing the argument forward with either a pull from the front or a kick in the behind, here with invigorating encouragement, there with questions so challenging as to be damning. A generative concept for Mailer was that "form was the physical equivalent of memory," meaning that the form, say, of a piece of driftwood revealed the history of the wood. The scars and missing knots, knobs and hollows, were evidence of its experience. Its very deformities were telling and embodied time in the same way that Cubism, by splaying separate planes onto a flat surface, put past, present, and future into a single dimension. Additionally, if terrors were part of the history of the form, then the form possessed the power of a gargoyle and could function magically to protect the creator from the anxiety it expressed. Mailer expected his meditation to function as a

midwife to his imagination in producing the projected biography, but he found, as he says in the preface to the book finally delivered last year, 30 years later, that Picasso "had stimulated the dialogues in such a way that one had insights into the extremities of one's own thinking but few biographical perceptions about him."

Why did it take Mailer so long to develop the biographical perceptions offered now? How could it be otherwise? The occasion to imagine Picasso as a young man had to wait until Mailer was an old man, partly, no doubt, because of the tremendous research involved in mastering the drama of Picasso's growth as an artist. In his robust voice, Mailer shows why mistresses often start out as models and are discarded when they no longer serve as muse. Mailer brings out Picasso's artistic competitiveness, his sexual jealousy (Picasso would no more let his mistress model for other artists than he would allow them to put a stroke on his work-in-progress), and his clairvoyant regard for the tyranny of his own hand-eye coordination. Hundreds of Picasso's works are reproduced, the photographs woven into the text as in a well-timed slide presentation. Mailer's descriptions of Picasso's paintings and drawings are full and convincing, a model of how to say something important about visual art and say it without the tedious jargon of the expert. And, keeping in mind that Mailer never met Picasso, one could compare Mailer's portrait to those of several biographers of Picasso, including John Richardson, Françoise Gilot, and James Lord, and maintain that Mailer's book is as vivid as those by his intimates. It is true Mailer has been criticized for quoting abundantly from primary sources, but it is obvious that a work of scholarship would not be competent without a utilization of established references. Indeed Mailer translates several of the sources himself, and what would be an editorial coup for an obscure scholar becomes the failing of a major author. The real resentment must arise from knowing that Mailer worked with material available to all, yet was able to animate it by refracting it through his own consciousness.

As a 19-year-old Spanish painter in Paris, Picasso could not speak French, but he learned, as Mailer says, that the curve of a line proved to be the equal of a turn of phrase. This link between the visual and verbal is the fulcrum of Mailer's insight into Picasso. Mailer discusses a portrait of Casagemas, Picasso's friend who committed suicide in late adolescence. In this small oil, 11 by 14 inches, a thick, phallic candle burns beside Casagemas in repose under a sheet, his bearded face exposed to a lurid flame. Mailer is not the first to remark that the flame, its brightness gaping from within, looks like a vagina, even as it seems to mean something luminous about the boundary between life and death. The early work hints at Picasso's future progress, through psychological description to rough, primitive, carved expressions of form, and Mailer says, "it could be argued that there will be a direct line of development over the next decade from the Blue Period, soon to appear, into the vast aesthetic

range of Cubism. Picasso had entered the world of visual equivalents."

Mailer continues, "One can ponder the concept. An artist's line in a drawing can be the equivalent of a spoken word or two. The bend of the fingers can prove equal to a 'dejected hand,' or the outline of the upper leg muscles speak of an 'assertive thigh.' Form is also a language, and so it is legitimate to cite visual puns—that is, visual equivalents, and visual exchanges. No matter how one chooses to phrase it, artists, for centuries, have been painting specific objects, only to discover that they also look like something else."

Picasso was born during an earthquake. He was witness to an autopsy of a woman killed by lightning, performed with a saw on her skull in order to examine her brain. Picasso was himself the groundbreaker who split the faces of the women he loved, dividing by dissection, deforming savagely, and doubling the face by exposing the profile. Mailer writes of the portraits of Olga, Picasso's first wife, his mistress Dora Maar, and his second wife, Jacqueline, that "we can see that he lived, nonetheless, with these women in a manner that some men never do: He was *in* each relationship—he saw the women as his equal. No matter how hideously he presented these three women, he would never have delineated them so if he had not entered into a depth of revulsion for what their relationship had become, and that, in turn, disclosed how hideous were his own spiritual sores. The physiognomy of his psyche is present in each of these portrayals."

Mailer's portrait focuses on Picasso as a young man as he undergoes the profound transition into the creator of "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," and an important portion of the book—leading through the urchin melancholy of the Blue Period and the opium-like bliss of the Rose Period and through the cubist collaboration with Braque—is told through the eyes of Fernande Oliver, Picasso's first serious mistress with whom he lived for seven crucial years, 1905-1912, in the bohemian squalor of the dilapidated "Bateau Lavoir" in Montmartre. "A strange and sordid house," she writes of their residence, "the most diverse noises sounding from morning to night, discussions, songs, exclamations, cries, the racket of slop pails being emptied and dropped to the floor, the noise of pitchers being set down on the stone of the fountain, doors slammed, and the most questionable groans which passed right through the closed doors of these studios." Large portions of her second set of memoirs, never published in English, have been translated by Mailer, and her voice, so present in feeling, sustains Mailer's running commentary on space and time, form and creativity.

Mailer's probing instinct for the motives, noble and base, that drive the great artist might seem to offer the famous author an opportunity to expound on his own motives, but, no, Picasso's egotism is an occasion for Mailer's modesty. The book's strength is that its author does not compete with his subject—could Mailer as a young man have been as modest? Mailer seems to make no assertion, however provoca-

SPECIALIZING IN FINE PROVINCETOWN PROPERTIES



SALES • PRIVATE HOMES

CONDOMINIUMS

BUSINESS & INCOME PROPERTIES

Summer Rentals—by the week, month & season
... and Truro too!

ATLANTIC BAY REAL ESTATE

Alan J. Wagg and Gregg Russo, Realtors
166 Commercial St. • Provincetown, MA 02657
(508) 487-2430



Leslie Parsons • Judi Best • Mary McKenzie • Jeri Boccio

Across the Bay

Real Estate
Sales & Rentals

Pilgrim House Complex
336 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657

(508) 487-8888

Fax: (508) 487-4770

e mail: xthebay@wn.net



Serving Provincetown, Truro, and Wellfleet

"Please patronize the arts"



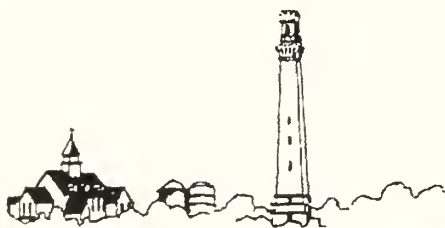
Our Insurance
Is Your Assurance

**Fireside Insurance
Agency Inc.**



Box 760
#10 Shank Painter Common
Shank Painter Road
Provincetown, MA 02657
Tel. 508-487-9044

Provincetown
WE HAVE IT COVERED!



RSVP-TOWN

- ◆ Travel Network
- ◆ In Town Reservations
- ◆ Provincetown Properties

Vacation Rentals
Guest House & Motel Rooms
Real Estate Sales & Rentals
Full Service Travel Agency

4 Standish Street
Provincetown, MA 02657-1419
(508) 487-1883 (800) 67P-Town
Fax: (508) 487-6140
E-Mail: RSVPTOWN@AOL.COM

tive, that cannot be substantiated by a discussion of some work of Picasso's. My favorite is the idea that the cubist search for universal form may have been driven by a desire to transcend sex. "Not all love affairs are carnal," Mailer writes. The four-subject portrait that is "Les Femmes d'Alger" was never resolved by Picasso. The artist could not satisfy himself. One feels in the dichotomies of the painting the tortured blending of the rock-like manliness of Gertrude Stein and witch-like femininity of Fernande. Mailer's meditation on form thus leads him to a meditation on gender, inspired by Gertrude Stein, whom he says represents "the most monumental crossover in gender" that Picasso had ever encountered. With Fernande, Picasso "had entered the essential ambiguity of deep sex, where one's masculinity and femininity is forever turning into its opposite, so that a phallus, once emplaced within a vagina, can become more aware of the vagina than its own phallitude—that is to say, one is, at the moment, a vagina as much as a phallus, or for a woman vice versa, a phallus just as much as a vagina: At such moments, no matter one's physical appearance, one has, in the depths of sex, crossed over into androgyny."

—CHRISTOPHER BUSA

Christopher Busa's interview with Karen Finley appears elsewhere in this issue.

A.D.

by Kate Millett
W.W. Norton & Company

Little is more frustrating than listening to a friend lament love unrequited by someone everyone else knows is no good anyway. It's even worse when this friend acknowledges the beloved's downfalls, yet remains in a state of uncontrollable longing. Reading Kate Millett's latest memoir, which recounts her life-long love for, and anguish over, her Aunt Dorothy—A.D. of the title—you might find yourself groaning, "Oh come on, Kate, she was cruel and cold as ice, you said so yourself!" But listen and nod for awhile, be a patient companion. Millett indeed emerges from the cycle of "woe is me's" and "if only's" that, if you've been there, you know, can swallow you up. Resolution arrives, and she finally can, in the last words of the book: "let go."

Millett's success in letting go is especially honorable given the confluence of vital roles A.D. played in her life. Aunt Dorothy is: the first love, as a childhood crush; the lasting love, with passion never diminished; the symbol, as a wealthy St. Paul "aristocrat," collector and patron of the arts, of all that is great and beautiful in life; and the primary link, as sister to Millett's father, to the man who abandoned Millett and her family. Two circumstances darken the shadow cast by Dorothy's figure. First, an old betrayal. Aunt Dorothy, who financed Millett's Oxford education on the condition that she sever all ties to girlfriend Jaycee and swear off her lesbian urges

forever, later discovers that Millett lied, having secretly lived with Jaycee while in England. Millett fights for 25 years, sometimes desperately, for forgiveness, but receives only contempt from A.D. Second, the impetus and imprimatur for the memoir, Aunt Dorothy dies, destroying any hope for reconciliation.

Knowing pieces of Millett's biography—instant icon of early feminism upon publication of *Sexual Politics* in 1970; founder of The Farm, a self-supporting colony for women artists and writers; prolific artist and writer herself—it is difficult to accept that someone necessarily of such fortitude could wither so under the condemnation of an aunt of dubious merit. Then, knowing pieces of Millett's work, one recalls that her strength lies in never shying away from sore spots and monsters, and that she tackles them always through art.

In A.D., Millett's art is revealed most beautifully in her agile handling of chronology and balanced presentation of contradictory emotions. Sifting through 50 years of what could be called, albeit simplistically, a love-hate relationship, Millett grounds us to time on the paths of remembrance worn as she mourns A.D.'s death. As a child Millett lived in two discordant familial circles, the maternal side characterized by "sturdy peasant honesty," the paternal by "implacable aristocratic gaiety and distance, snobbery and playfulness." At her mother's house, there was reality, not least economic, while at Aunt Dorothy's lakeside estate there were first editions of the classics, paintings by great artists, a Han horse statue, Haydn at dinnertime, lofty friends. A highlight of the book, for its exceptional joy, comes when young Kate, Aunt Dorothy and Elsa Schiaparelli, the European fashion designer, gather in A.D.'s basement, the adults drunk on champagne and Kate on ginger ale, and all of them fingerpainting and playing and laughing late into the night.

But things get complicated as life goes on. Dorothy's standards are rigid and narrow and Kate falls outside the boundaries in every way. Millett imagines Aunt Dorothy's summation: "Problematic offspring: first she is queer, then turns artist and throws away her education, writes those dreadful books, and now it appears she is mad as well." Until her death, Aunt Dorothy scorned Millett, initially for the deception and "sinful" union, but overall to rub in her disgust with Millett's chosen life and work. Millett attributes her becoming an artist and writer, to a large extent, to the example A.D. set as the connoisseur of culture, the pinnacle of intelligence and womanhood. So how did Millett's formation of herself go so wrong in the eyes of the ideal that inspired her?

When the inquiry comes this far, the memoir reaches its deepest level, focusing beyond what happened to explore how what happened contributed to the making of the author. Upon visiting A.D.'s house after the death, Millett notes to herself, "here was formed your . . . templates of behavior, your primary sources and examples . . . a certain kind of moral perception and the knowledge you have fallen short of it

all, run away, chosen differently, gone bohemian, become a farmer, run to the ranks of the feminists, stood by the barricades of women's liberation, bent your elbow in gay bars, stayed out all night in Tokyo, watched the sea in Provincetown, found the rent on the Bowery, rebuilt barns, followed your star." This memoir is also a tribute. Its most poignant rumination may be Millett's description of Dorothy as "someone who made you feel that life was a very big thing." For this gift alone, Aunt Dorothy is worthy of worship. Without its giving, Millett might never have gone so far and wide, in place and mind and action.

It will please those who call Provincetown home, particularly those who have made some emotional passage here and felt the clarifying dynamic of this place, to observe the extraordinary changes that happen in Millett upon her annual visit. A.D. is "two years dead now and I spend a perfect day in Provincetown scrambling my woe into an old portable typewriter which transposes my persistent if divided emotions into further incoherence," she writes from her regular room at Poor Richard's Landing. But it isn't so, the incoherence part. Suddenly, after two-thirds-a-book-full of wheel-spinning grief, Millett pulls, as though from "the ocean clear as air, as washed glass . . . lucent . . . acute," an ingenious re-casting of her relationship with A.D. "Now that you are dead, I have the impudent ability to summon you everywhere," she propounds. "I have forced you along over here to Provincetown . . . full of queers, those people we have always differed on. Artists too, the other difference."

Millett brings Aunt Dorothy to Provincetown, solidifying her own identity by forcing A.D. to accept it, then modifying A.D.'s identity by sheer will. "The only possible course is to convert you. And to this I have set my mind." Millett's wry humor shines here, reflecting a new glow on her writing. "You know more, being dead; your spirit—for you must now be spirit alone—cannot afford that baggage. Took one look at the world from its new vantage point beyond death and jettisoned the snobbery that was once your life and breath. You may even have renounced Republicanism. You have surely gotten a better grip on world economy, the facts of poverty, war, class. You're about as cool now, as tolerant and open, as you were in college, I expect. And a good deal wiser." This fantasy, or reality re-invented when the old one fails, is effective, not only in redeeming A.D., but in bringing Millett to peace. When life is not a big enough thing, we have to stretch its dimensions to fit; it's good to be reminded that in Provincetown, life has so much give.

—JENNIFER LIESE

Jennifer Liese writes and makes ceramics in Provincetown. She will begin graduate work at the Art Institute of Chicago this fall.

Secret Life: An Autobiography

by Michael Ryan

Pantheon Books

In nearly all I've read about the poet Michael Ryan's memoir, *Secret Life*, reviewers focused on one aspect of the book, the sexual nature of his secret life. But the title is really about a parallel universe in which all of Ryan's feelings, not just his sexual ones, were fugitive. In that sense, the forbidden qualities have been overlooked by reviewers, a shame, because this is a book with a full life behind it.

Ryan is a poet first, able to take a harsh experience—particularly the narrative about being sexually molested as a small child by a next door neighbor who was 20 years old—and turn the tale into a greater truth. Reading this book, I am reminded of something that the poet Louise Glück wrote in an essay titled "The Forbidden": "The child who involuntarily inhabits a taboo is marked by that fact." Elsewhere in her essay, Glück reflects on the rare chroniclers of childhood traumas: "These voices specify rage and contamination and shame; what they demand, however, is admiration for unprecedented bravery, as the speaker looks back and speaks the truth." One of the more powerful writers of the forbidden, Glück suggests, is the poet Martha Rhodes, whose poem "His," corresponds with Michael Ryan's sense of being soiled and possessed: "Oh, I've known since I was seven / since then I've known I was him, / his."

Ryan's upbringing was typically American on many levels—initially Midwestern, Catholic, working class; later moved to the South (Florida), and finally to the post-industrial Northeast, a grungy working city in Pennsylvania. His secrets make him grow apart from his family and contemporaries. His addictive personality forces him to feel different from others, therefore separate, not a part of the flow. That is where the parallel universe he explores comes into sharp focus. That is where his being such a good writer takes on a moral component. Writing well is a sweet kind of revenge on those who made Ryan feel less-than. His skill as a poet makes the life that is told both noble and highly moral.

Some lines from Ms. Rhodes again seem appropriate. In "For Once," she writes: "I hate to be touched, he said, / and this was news to me. / You love to be touched, I said."

Boundaries are a problem in Ryan's life, but then so is everyday reality, the knowable universe. Later in the narrative he says of himself, the professor in a relationship with a student: "I was another person: I was her molester. To be invaded, to be confused about where the other person ends and you begin; this is what it feels like to be molested." This observation is perhaps as good a description of physical abuse as I've seen written down; it captures not so much the black and white clarity of the experience, but the interminable gray areas, and how these grays overlap each other, forming the patterns of abuse.

A freshman at Notre Dame, befuddled, alienated, alone, still unresolved about the molestations that occurred years ago, Ryan begins to read pornography. He writes: "Although I knew it wasn't real, I believed these things happened, that there were people who felt this way and were this way and did these things, because this is the way I felt and was, and these were the things I wanted to do."

A lack of morality is not the issue. If anything, morality runs through this memoir like exposed veins. Sometimes, Ryan might write: "Yes, it was a mortal sin, but what had God done for me lately?" Elsewhere he writes that "secrets were always true. And the truth was secret." But in the end, Ryan hides nothing, and in revealing all, he finds a transcendence. It is as if, once he accepts the past, he no longer has to regret it, nor wish to shut the door on it. At last, he is free.

Once again, it might be useful to reflect upon something that Louise Glück observes in her essay about the forbidden because it seems to appropriate to this memoir by Michael Ryan. She says that "when the force and misery of compulsion are missing . . . when ambivalence toward the self is missing, the written recreation, no matter how artful, forfeits emotional authority." I like how that is said. Emotional authority is forfeited when ambivalence is missing—now that's a twist—and when misery itself is missing.

Yeats's conception of purgatory was of a place of nearly infinite torture where the parties had to live, over and over, their crimes and sins until they were expiated. Perhaps, in the end, that is all a memoir can be—an attempt to end the cycle of abuse. The compulsion to write replaces the sicker one to repeat the actions of the trauma, if not upon oneself, then upon others. In Michael Ryan's case, he pursued young men and women in his charge to educate, choosing to abuse them sexually instead. The greater truth is the healing that occurs in the narrative. It is as if Ryan has experienced one of the promises of most 12-step programs. No matter how far down the scale he's gone, he finally sees that sharing the story of his experience can benefit others. I suppose this is what they mean by sharing one's experience, strength, and hope; you tell your story to another person.

Ah, but what a beautifully torturous journey it was to come to this awareness. From the time he was five years old and seduced by the neighbor, a young photographer, Ryan kept secrets. He seemed to verify the adage that we are only as sick as our secrets. Though he sexually acts out in abundance with men and woman and even with a dog, the deeper, darker secret was the one behind the sexual addiction, the addictive personality itself which always wants to separate the addict from him or her self, to isolate him or her from the community, and to use every compulsion imaginable to stop up the giant hole, the emptiness, at the center of one's being.

No amount of sex or drugs or alcohol or food or enabling or any other compulsion can ever fill that void. The hole is bottomless, a great ci-

pher. Instead, through grace, redemption, prayer, meditation, and a lot of other 12-step work, Ryan found relief. Grace was given; grace was taken. This is a remarkable book for that reason because what he writes about finally is nothing short of the miraculous, this ability to stop doing what he always did, even though while he did it, he expected different results every time.

Regarding this part of the book, Ryan says, "the evidence was abundant that my compulsion to glorify myself sexually was being taken over by a compulsion to humiliate myself sexually." Thus he entered the never-ending cycle of his own addiction in which he behaved compulsively more and more, hoping to relieve the pain he felt, only to find out that he felt worse each time he acted out. "For each woman I seduced, there were two more I tried to seduce, and 10 more I wanted to seduce but couldn't. So what I experienced most of the time was failure and frustration."

His addiction did not stop with women. He also acted out with men. That was no better; in fact, in his case, it was a lot worse because of the guilt and shame he experienced in the pick-up bars in Georgetown or in Texas.

But *Secret Life* is not a shocking book. It is an honest book without artifice, beautifully written, yes, by an extremely fine-witted poet. Its strength is in its artless prose, the "blank" or "white" prose of a George Orwell or an Albert Camus—not lyrical but reportorial, a poetry of fact, the song as journalistic aria. I am impressed that a poet with an ardent sense of the lyrical could so willfully jettison that gift to write his memoir in a fine-tempered, plain style. Allowing the author to expose rather than mask who he was, the style becomes, ultimately, lyrical.

This memoir is, in a dramatic sense, the classic unmasking that one sees on stage. Character is revealed, moment by moment, choice by choice. Much is pedestrian, the typical upbringing of a Baby Boomer. His education is parochial from first grade through college, and after 12 years of nuns teaching him, he winds up at Notre Dame.

Ryan nearly fails out of college in his first semester, but a teacher notices his unusual literary gift, backs him up, and gets him into an honors program. From then on, he flourishes academically. Eventually he receives a Ph.D. from Iowa, and winds up teaching poetry at Princeton.

The book covers his life from the time he is molested at five years old through college. It skips much of his 20s with the exception of a few key incidents, and winds up with Ryan in his 30s hopelessly acting out. Ryan appears destined to teach at Princeton and also to run the Creative Writing Program. Of course his sexual proclivities get in the way of his career; he finds himself demoted in his academic pursuits and drummed out of the university community for sleeping with his undergraduate students.

The book begins and ends with references to a 12-step program that helped him to recover from his illness, his compulsive behavior, a day at a time.

Something in this memoir gets to the core of nearly all good nonfiction, what today is often called creative nonfiction, and that is a moral urge combining with a journalistic one to produce what the writer Seymour Krim, the grandfather of creative nonfiction, called "the greater truth." An essence emerges in Ryan's book that is not found in poetry alone, nor in the merely factual either, but in a hybridization. I am suggesting that Ryan arrives at the place where the storyteller, as once was true in ancient Ireland, is the only true historian, and ultimately the real king.

I find it impossible to respond to this book without revealing my own secrets and compulsions. To some reviewers of the book, the 12-step references which book-end the narrative were troubling, a desperate attempt to feel good. I responded to the language and its content wholeheartedly. Though not a sex addict, I am an addict, too, and in recovery, and so I identified with many of the feelings in this book, especially feeling apart from the flow of everyday events that surround one. The feeling which Ryan pinpoints, then articulates, is one of feeling different from everyone else, but also feeling unique. I've heard it described as feeling like a gold-plated piece of shit at the center of the universe. Ryan articulates the grandiosity of this personality type which flourishes in the absence of an acknowledgment of any force greater than oneself.

When I was a few years into my own recovery, I remember a good friend with much more time than I had saying to me that after five years, when he got back his feelings, he retrieved painful lost memories, one of his aunt seducing him as a five-year-old boy. It upset me, even disgusted me, and I said to my friend I hoped that was not going to be my own reward after five years in recovery—discovering that my aunt seduced me when I was five years old. But, in fact, that is just what I came to see at the end of those five years. Many more years after that, I am finally able to articulate it, to own the experience, however trapped and painful it was.

I say this here because *Secret Life* forces readers to confront their own painful stories. Besides being a very well-written book, artfully simple and narratively complex, the memoir is also a moral spike driven into the reader's heart. You can run from it, but like Joe Louis once said of his opponents, you can't hide.

Many of the specific references in this book seem akin to my personal mythology. This includes growing up in a Catholic household with a drunken father and attending parochial school and also being certain nuns' favorite student. Clearwater, one of the Florida cities in Ryan's journey, is also where most of my family lives today. I too once taught in the Creative Writing Program at Princeton, though I never got into any scandals, and rather than being let go, my contract simply ended after five years. In that sense, my experiences at Princeton were quite the opposite of Michael Ryan's, yet I identified quite easily with that part of the memoir, too.

Ryan's book was quite vivid for me, not just the main narrative and its themes, but also the smaller details, without which a book is nothing.

Saying that, I don't believe one has to know Princeton, Florida, or even Catholicism to grasp what Michael Ryan has done. One does not need to be an incest survivor or a survivor of any kind of childhood trauma, sexual or otherwise, to lock into the narrative here. His memoir, about the powerless land that the addict inhabits, is also about the human condition of living in an aimless world. How to overcome? In Ryan's memoir the secret to life is not having a secret life but an open one. Believing in something doesn't hurt either, nor does faith.

Michael Ryan writes unflinchingly, without apology, and with great urgency. *Secret Life* holds a mirror to the lie that a ruptured childhood will haunt us forever. In his mid-40s, the author comes to terms with his own sickness, and slowly, as the narrative concludes, one glimpses the author getting well. Despite what may have been written about this book, it is not a sick tale but a healthy one; it is a story about healing, about nurturing one's psyche back to feeling good about who you are. In that sense, it is as bracing as anything the Pope or Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote or, for that matter, the words of faith-healers and channelers. I read *Secret Life* as if the words were written by a medium bringing news from the dark side of the American dream into the light of articulate prose. Part of the healing is this book itself; another part is the example of the author. Ultimately, his sharing dispels his secrets.

Louise Glück observes that "it is the silence that is collusive, that becomes for the victim the emblem of his or her deepest relations, since only with the one who damaged him are there no secrets." Now, though, the molester, his victim, and the world know, and the purgatory of one's secret life ends. That Michael Ryan survives this is remarkable enough; what makes it extraordinary is his ability to shape the experience, articulate it, own it, then let it go. We reach a pure moment bereft of tension. This, I think, is what is meant by grace. —MICHAEL STEPHENS

Michael Stephens's memoir of Fritz Bultman and Myron Stout appears elsewhere in this issue.

Lights, Camera, Poetry! American Movie Poems, the First Hundred Years

Edited by Jason Shinder
Harcourt Brace

"I don't want to make films for people who don't read," said Francois Truffaut. The dear departed French director would surely approve of Jason Shinder's newest anthology. This gathering of poems about movies begins with Frost's darkly theatrical "Provide, Provide," though the poem decidedly does not set the tone for the book. I had never thought of it as a movie poem, and seeing it here made me read it in an entirely new way—the "loudness" of the poem that many critics have complained about, its lack of

subtlety, make it fit here. The tone of the anthology, another way of speaking of the taste and vision of the editor, is eclectic. Starting with Frost and Sandburg may sound safe, but look again at Sandburg's "In a Breath": the violence of nature shown bigger than life on screen, while life goes on as usual outside.

That almost describes this book. Some of the poems evoke the experience of sitting in a dark theater so well you can smell the popcorn. Others are films unto themselves, shorter than real films but sometimes as complete and satisfying. I couldn't help playing a little game as I read these poems: matching the poets to the directors, actors, and films the poets chose to write about, and generalizing (unfairly, of course) from there. So Allen Ginsberg and Edward Field become the Marlene Dietrichs of American poetry, Frost the withered hag (once the beauty) Abishag, Gregory Corso the Errol Flynn, Hart Crane the Charlie Chaplin, Delmore Schwartz the Marilyn Monroe, Adrienne Rich the Godard—the rest are for you to discover. This is exactly what a good anthology should do: allow us to make connections, to see the poems or their subjects in a new way.

Poetry and film go together naturally in their respective evocations of the dream-state, a fact made apparent by many of these poems. Orson Welles said, "I believe that the cinema should be essentially poetic; that is why during the shooting and not during the preparation, I try to plunge myself into a poetic development, which differs from narrative development and dramatic development." What so many of these poets see in the films they write about is that same poetic process, and it's safe to assume that at least some of them were directly inspired by the process, as opposed to the finished product, of the film. Transferred from image to word (an image that may have begun as a word), that process is embodied in many of these poems. Adrienne Rich writes in "Images for Godard": "free in the dusty beam of the projector / the mind of the poet is changing / the moment of change is only the poem."

There are hundreds of poetry anthologies vying for shelf space these days. Like this book, most have a theme. Unlike this book, most also have a distinct political bent which causes editorial tunnel-vision. The range of poetry offered here is as wide ranging as the movies represented, from Cummings to Dugan to Springsteen to Doty, from John Wayne to Jean-Luc, from *Gone with the Wind* to *Valley of the Dolls*. This is Jason Shinder's fifth anthology, and I believe he's done as much as anyone in this country to help poetry reach a wider audience. He refuses to settle for the lowest common denominator in his effort, and that helps anyone who picks up this book.

—WYN COOPER

Wyn Cooper has taught film, literature, and writing. A poem from his collection *The Country of Here Below*, called "Fun," was turned into the Grammy-winning song, "All I Wanna Do," by Sheryl Crow. He lives in Vermont.

Polite Society

by Melanie Sumner

Houghton Mifflin

In Melanie Sumner's daring new collection of stories, a young American woman arrives in Senegal to be barraged with the foreign, the likes of which her sheltered upbringing could not have prepared her for. Within moments of her arrival she meets a handless beggar, takes note of speed limit signs illustrated with skull and crossbones, and looks out upon a landscape as "flat and sandy as the moon." Drums beat faintly in the distance. Mosquitoes feed avidly on exposed flesh. Indeed, Senegal itself shapes the behavior of every figure in this book, asserting itself as a force of life and destruction, practically breathing, as if it were a character.

With the exception of the opening story, in which an ambassador's wife suspects her husband of infidelity, *Polite Society* chronicles the struggles of Louise Darren Parkman, a 25-year-old woman from Tennessee who joins the Peace Corps for lack of anything better to do. We accompany her in increasingly complicated situations, from affairs with Senegalese men, to fumbled attempts at teaching English, to civil uprisings, to long sweltering nights of heavy drinking. Nothing is certain in this place of constant slippage, and Darren continually finds herself coming up against all her self-doubts, longings, and her desperate need to do away with things.

The book is populated with incredibly vivid characters—among them various villagers, Peace Corps workers, and Jaraffe, a teenage tour guide who leads her to a dark cave stacked with rotting skeletons. There's her American friend, Jane, who's both touching and sad, if only because, like Darren, she seems to be possessed of a nameless grief, all the while laughing about it, drinking herself to oblivion. Darren's parents make a brief appearance. During their Christmas visit, her mother insists upon videotaping a village family against her daughter's explicit wishes. "Play ball," she cries, aiming a camcorder at a throng of shrieking children, in a scene that's as funny as it is downright dreadful. And finally there's Yousef, a Senegalese student to whom Darren is briefly engaged. A gentle, affectionate soul who willingly endures Darren's efforts to conceal the relationship from her parents, he seems to be genuinely in love with her, concerned about her well-being and her drinking problem until he eventually reaches his limit, leaving her with a heartbreaking letter: "You shame me. I try to do some good for you and even speak English and wash dishes which I have never done for another woman, but you treat me without respect. It is too hard . . . Excuse me, but I am not loving you."

Along with compelling characters, the book teems with vivid descriptions of its singular world. In an era in which some new fiction devalues the centrality of place, Sumner understands the interrelationship between her characters and their cultural environment. Darren at one point watches a young boy maneuver down



The Art of Hairdressing Yearround 7 Days

Contemporary Hair Design
for Men & Women

JIM RANN

487-1206

361A COMMERCIAL STREET
PROVINCETOWN, MA 02657

Provincetown Village®
<http://www.provincetown.com>



Featuring:

- Provincetown Today
- Provincetown History
- Events Calendar
- Getting Here
- Getting Around
- What To Do
- The Arts
- Nightlife
- Where to Stay
- Where to Eat
- Shopping
- Real Estate
- Services
- The Seashore
- Education
- Gay & Lesbian Interests
- News
- People
- Organizations
- Worship
- And So Much More...

Offering:

- HTML 2.0 & 3.0 authoring
- Aggressive WWW Marketing
- E mail Accounts
- E mail to fax routing
- Java Programming
- CGI Scripting
- Original Art & Logo Design
- Copywriting
- Image Scanning
- Domain Name Registration



Provincetown Design Group
104 Bradford Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
phone: 508-487-2779
pdg@provincetown.com

the street in costume, in what turns out to be an oddly unexpected moment of grace: "The next day, at noon, an hour in Senegal as oppressively silent as midnight, . . . Yaya passed by Darren in his crown. It was constructed from bits of wire and pasteboard, and 300 feet of pink toilet paper. The crown bloomed in pink petals of joy, swept around in figure-eights of grace, and whirled up into the heavens where it exploded in triumph that unfurled along the child's back and arms in banners of glory." This image says more about the strange, magical, ever-shifting world in which Darren has found herself than any spoken exchange between two characters.

Perhaps the book's greatest risk is to offer us a narrator who is essentially unlikable, even hateful. Darren seems driven toward her own extinguishment. Like the narrator of Denis Johnson's *Jesus's Son*, she continually challenges our sympathies, deliberately testing our capacity for compassion. Darren rarely reflects upon the consequences of her actions. She rarely questions her essential privilege (even pointing out to friends that, back home, she has "an intercom and seven telephones"), her racism, her ungenerous attitude toward her adopted countrymen. When, not long after her arrival, she tells Moustapha, a man with whom she's had an affair, that she hates him, that she hates his country, one doesn't initially take the statement at face value, believing it's an indication of her profound displacement. After she's lived in Senegal for some time, however, and drives over a prone body to the demands of a mob, only to think later that "she didn't care" whether she'd killed someone or not, one feels more than a little unease. Her lack of reaction may be intended to be taken ironically. She's protecting herself—or is that simply too easy? There's no rule that says that a protagonist must be likable (think of Swift, Ford Maddox Ford, Flannery O'Connor, William Gass). And yet, in the closing scene, where Darren is mired in rage and hopelessness, one cannot help but wonder why the implied narrative—Darren's struggle to reclaim herself—is absent from this book, this tale that cries out for continuance. (There are glimmers—"Later it would rise up like a welt on her soul, and scar, but now she couldn't feel it"—but only glimmers.) Darkness doesn't necessarily equal complexity. One cannot help but ask: does the story stall before it's truly able to offer us something?

The issue might be formal. The limitation of the linked-story collection is that the point of view is often too fractured—some pieces here are third person, others first—necessitating the repetition of information to ensure the wholeness of each individual part. Inevitably there are gaps. (One is left with questions: Darren's history preceding her arrival is sketched in a single brief paragraph. What happened?) Even the most successful linked-story collections—*Jesus's Son*, Susan Minot's *Monkeys*—are rarely as satisfying as a good novel. The very form of the novel forces the writer to develop an overriding point of view, a synthesis, embracing all the places

where a character has been. One hopes the writer will take us somewhere unexpected—to possibility, if not hope—engaging us in the imaginative process, calling us to ask, *what next?* It's not that this book is without generosity. In one shocking and lovely moment, seconds before Alioune, a crazy man, is about to hit Darren over the head with a rock, she feels "a profound love for her life, for all life." However, such instances are all too fleeting, and one wishes for more moments when Darren's character is deepened.

This concern may be a matter of taste. The miracle of the book is that *Polite Society* remains a courageous achievement, as disturbing as it is entertaining, able to stand up to the toughest questions. It transports us to another landscape and culture—a world as beautiful and corrupt as our own—inadvertently asking us to reconsider our comfortable assumptions of those we've perceived as other. Melanie Sumner is a writer to watch. With her storyteller's skill, her gift for rich, colorful language, and her willingness to maneuver through the darkest waters, her work will no doubt continue to challenge.

—PAUL LISICKY

Paul Lisicky's interview with Elizabeth McCracken appears elsewhere in this issue.

Growing Darkness, Growing Light

Jean Valentine

Carnegie Mellon

Ensconced in a mystical lineage with Rilke, Akhmatova, Dickinson, Rumi, Hopkins, Blake, Basho, Jean Valentine stands on her own. A poet whose career spans 30 years and eight books, her spare lyrics are developed in a rare and disarming way in her new collection. Culled from dreams and the hinterlands of consciousness, these poems have little narrative tracking and almost nothing happens, yet with the gleaming precision of an acupuncturist, she locates great energy with each word, each image. Fragments, magnetized, shimmer on the page and inspire a charged silence.

Valentine's work, nearly impossible to paraphrase, is characterized by a slow spiralling accumulation, shot through with repetition and chiming descant music embossed with soulful instruction about life's knots. Take, for example, "Tell Me, What Is the Soul":

There is a prison room,
the floor, cement,
in the middle of the room
a black pool full of black water.
It leads to an invisible canal.
Plunder is the pool. Plunder is the canal.

By the wall, by a fire,
Mandelstam was reciting,
in his yellow leather coat,
the criminals were listening,
they offered him
bread and the canned stuff,
which he took . . .

Harkening to Akhmatova as a guiding spirit ("Everything is plundered, betrayed, sold, / Death's great black wing scrapes the air, / Misery gnaws to the bone. / Why then do we not despair?"), Valentine is elliptical in her end-line, suggestive in her title, expressing a simplicity of daring exercised with intelligent caution and profound humility. The new book reads like gnostic riddles or Hindu proverbs which simultaneously confound and illuminate. Contradictions inhere, defying interpretation.

Her technique serves her subtle distillations. She writes in "The Tractors":

The tractors at night,
the dimly lighted
kindly lobsters
with glass sides,
with men inside,
and at home, wives,
and depression's black dogs
walking out of
January hedges'
hacked off sides.

Notice the long lambent *i's* flickering through the first six lines only to be snuffed out by "depression's black dogs." The musicality underscores the change in tone when the pastoral is interrupted by dual depressions, economic and personal.

Resourceful with craft, "Open Heart" is constructed without the constriction of "The Tractors." Lean on punctuation, slight shifts and lacy juxtapositions cascade the poem's flow, a river's surface masking powerful undercurrents. In "Eyes Only," as with other poems in this volume, one can sense the scaffolding of a sonnet; including the spaces there are 12 lines and a concluding couplet and the images are posited in a nonce argument, or supposition. The sonnet is no more apparent than in the savage "Black for the People":

The man I am with is black,
we are with nothing but white men.
He's caught, he says
they're going to shock him or burn him.
I say I'll be there.

But I'm not him.
He has to go into a machine where
two white men put him. The machine
saws loud into his back, three,
four inches, into his back.
Then they let him go. Not
wanting him alive, not wanting him dead.
Their knees grind over the sea
and make malice. What is love. What does
love do.

Valentine once said, "Content is everything." In light of "Black for the People," one can see her lack of polemic, distraction, or excess, so willing is she to veer to the molten center.

Growing Darkness, Growing Light is rich in elegy and Valentine redeems the form. Her dead speak and sing. "Teach me / what I have to have

/ to live in this country," she asks the film-maker in "Fellini in Purgatory" "and he, as calm as calm, though he was dead: / Oh—milt,—and we're all of us milt." Or in "The Night of Wally's Service, Wally Said, "Hey, / don't look at me that way, / I'm only one day dead, / I need care."

—MICHAEL CARTER

A poem by Michael Carter appears elsewhere in this issue.

Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams

By Lyle Leverich
Crown

In his autobiography *Speak, Memory*, Vladimir Nabokov wrote that the pursuit of certain "thematic designs" through a life should be the purpose of autobiography. The same thing could be said for biography, and it is precisely what Lyle Leverich has done here. A theatrical producer and manager for half a century who was chosen by Tennessee Williams as his biographer just a few years before he died ("Baby, you write it," Williams is reported to have said), Leverich completed this book in 1990, seven years after Williams's death in 1983. Until now, however, publication was blocked by Lady Maria St. Just, one of Williams's literary trustees; (Ms. Just died last year, making publication possible).

Leverich's decision to divide the biography into two volumes (the second volume will appear in 1997) and to end this one with "the success" (Williams's first) of *The Glass Menagerie* is an interesting one and one that feels right, for Williams himself drew the same dividing line through what was more or less the center of his life. In his essay "The Catastrophe of Success," written three years after *The Glass Menagerie* was first produced (and subsequently published to accompany it), Williams called the success of *The Glass Menagerie* "an event that terminated one part of my life and began another about as different in all external circumstances as could well be imagined."

Throughout his early life, (34 years are covered here), Tennessee Williams again and again listed as his three favorite writers Anton Chekhov, Hart Crane, and D.H. Lawrence; Chekhov for his masterful plays and short stories, Crane for his ambitious and lyrical poetry, and Lawrence for his overall philosophy. Leverich writes that Williams was also moved by the many parallels between his and Lawrence's lives. As children, both were sickly; both had unhappy home lives, hovered over by crude, distant fathers and strong, domineering and puritanical mothers who felt they'd married beneath them. Perhaps more importantly, Williams, like Lawrence, believed that his own sexual character was dual, both male and female, as opposed to exclusively male; and finally, Lawrence's insistence upon a union of the sensual and the spiritual was a belief with which the playwright wholeheartedly agreed. Williams dedicated his first play, *Battle of Angels*, to Lawrence;

he wrote a one-act about Lawrence and his wife Frieda, *I Rise in Flame, Said the Phoenix*; he traveled to Taos to meet Frieda and, subsequently, he wrote a play, in collaboration with Donald Windham, based on Lawrence's short story, *You Touched Me!* (Further, Williams once referred to his mother as "the little Prussian officer in drag," an obvious allusion to Lawrence's famous short story "The Prussian Officer"; and in the autobiographical *The Glass Menagerie* he has the mother character refer to "That hideous book by that insane Mr. Lawrence," a book her son "Tom" has checked out of the local library which she swiftly returns.)

The Glass Menagerie is an expressionistic play which renders the emotional truth of Tennessee Williams's early family life—the oppressive if also largely absent father (Cornelius), the suffocating, puritanical mother (Edwina), the fragile, troubled sister (his beloved Rose, institutionalized for most of her life), and the aspiring writer. "His flight from his family into the refuge of 'success' would at length compose the contents of the first volume of my biography," Leverich writes. "For the first 30 years of his life, he was living *The Glass Menagerie*."

The theme of flight is the design that Leverich uncovers in Tennessee Williams's life. He writes that Williams "often declared that his strongest instinct was to be free," and that "he often described himself as 'a moving target . . . In one way or another, he was always in flight from confinement in all its guises . . . Flight could be called Tennessee Williams's natural existence.'" Here are a few more variations on that theme, in the playwright's own words: "My whole life has been a series of escapes, physical or psychological, more miraculous than any of Houdini's." "I can never stand still. I'm always the fugitive." And from a 1938 journal entry: "Dad started griping about my lack of jobs, etc. Surely I won't stay on here when I'm regarded as such a parasite. Now's the time to make a break—get away—away. I have pinned pictures of wild birds on my lavatory screen—significant—I'm desperately anxious to escape."

Gore Vidal writes about Tennessee Williams in his recent memoir *Palimpsest*: "I had long since forgotten why I called him 'the Glorious Bird,' until I came to reread his stories . . . The image of the bird is everywhere in his work. The bird is flight, poetry, life. The bird is time, death."

One of the places Williams fled to again and again in his early life was Provincetown, first recommended by his agent, Audrey Wood, largely because there were a number of summer theaters in the area, including the renowned Provincetown Playhouse, which another playwright Williams admired, Eugene O'Neill, had put on the map. And it was in Provincetown, too, that Tennessee Williams met Kip Kiernan, a Canadian dancer of Russian Jewish descent who Williams said reminded him of Nijinsky. ("when I lie on top of him," Williams wrote to his friend Donald Windham, "I feel like I am polishing the Statue of Liberty.") Their affair was brief; Kiernan soon married, then died of an inoperable brain tumor at the age of 26. Kip was

clearly the love of Tennessee Williams's life: Williams dedicated his first collection of stories to him, always carried a photo of him in his wallet, and often said, "Well, Kip, you live in my leftover heart." According to Leverich, Williams "was never again to release, or openly display, the burst of feeling" that he had for Kip.

And so the "Tom" of the title, Thomas Lanier Williams III, became Tennessee Williams (also nicknamed "Tenn," "10," and "Tennacity.") While Tom spent the first 30-some years of his life running from his family, towards success, Tennessee would spend the last 30-some fleeing the trappings of success, but writing, always writing, throughout it all; those who knew him speak of his amazing discipline and devotion to his craft, writing about eight hours a day for most of his professional life. And as we know, there were many more plays—*A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Orpheus Descending*, and *The Night of the Iguana*—to name but a few, as well as screenplays, collections of stories, poems, and a memoir.

While Lyle Leverich's book could have been more tightly constructed, that is a mere quibble in light of this rich contribution to Williams scholarship. For what he has done is nothing less than point out the fixed stars—family, writing, and that streetcar named desire—that governed Williams's early life (to paraphrase Sylvia Plath), and how that life, amidst all its seemingly random disarray, achieved a design of sorts, the pattern of one Glorious Bird in flight.

—ROBIN LIPPINCOTT

Robin Lippincott's book of short stories, *The Real, True Angel*, is forthcoming this summer from Fleur de lis Press. An excerpt from his novel *Mr. Dalloway* will appear this fall in *The American Voice*.

Four Landscapers of the Lower Cape

BY JOAN MARKS



FRANK CORBIN



GREGORY MORRIS

In this place where ponds, marshes, forests, dunes, ocean, and bay converge to create a startling design of natural beauty, is landscaping unnecessary? Isn't nature enough? The process of building disturbs and destroys natural vegetation, inflicting wounds which do not heal. We can control erosion by revegetation. With landscaping we can go further and enhance both a dwelling and its surroundings. Four landscapers, based on the Lower Cape, said they consider a wide range of factors in their planning, including the distant views and the nature of surrounding terrain, as well as a client's tastes, interests, and life style. Yet each has an individual approach to composing landscapes from the colors, textures, and layers of plantings

A major theme for **Frank Corbin**, a Wellfleet horticulturist who designs and installs landscapes and knows his plants backward and forward by their Latin names, is the use of native and naturalized plants and trees. (Naturalized refers to plants which act like natives in a foreign environment, such as *Rosa Rugosa*, a native of Japan which has been naturalized here because it is deep-rooted, drought tolerant and disease resistant.)

"All gardens require some love," Corbin maintains as a matter of fact. In his view, tending a garden can assume the proportions of "eternal warfare" since newly planted specimens demand frequent observation as well as irrigation. But native or naturalized plants don't need as much attention, since they tend to tolerate drought as well as tundra-like weather that can affect this area in winter.

A Massachusetts Certified Landscape Professional who has studied both at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and Habitat Institute for the Environment in Belmont, Corbin still considers himself essentially self-taught. He is apt to blend a property into the larger, surrounding landscape by putting airy, unobtrusive native trees and plants close to the edges. Trees like the shad and several varieties of pine, and shrubs such as the blueberry and inkberry, reassuring in their simplicity, imitate or duplicate those which grow wild nearby. As a contrast, more formal, introduced varieties are set closer in.

A case in point is a design Corbin produced with George Riley, with whom he often collaborates, for a home in Wellfleet. Like all properties, it had its pluses (a spectacular view of the marsh) and minuses (too near the road and the neighbors). Corbin capitalized on the view off the upper deck by planting beach grass to replicate what grows naturally on the marsh. As a transition between the house and the road, he created a woodland glen beyond a signature, custom-made lattice fence planted with climbing hydrangeas. The garden, which screens the

house from passersby, is a poetic, controlled melange of colors and textures: dwarf eastern white pine, dwarf bamboo, maiden and zebra ornamental grasses, native bayberry, three kinds of ferns (sweet, cinnamon, and hay-scented) as well as a Russian olive tree, native swamp azaleas and river birch, viburnum, spirea, holly, lamium, and clethra. Eunonymous and cotoneaster soften a wood retaining wall, while a cluster of hollies helps obscure an abutter's property, creating privacy.

For his part, Corbin is less concerned with inventing spectacular displays than with concentrating on what the client can see and experience from inside. "Views from the inside out are very important," he said. "You don't want to look at parked cars, or listen to road noises."

Understatement is the key to a subtle, spare, low-maintenance garden he devised in North Truro for a home on the bay, which has bearberry, beach plum, and pine trees on the periphery, followed by a succession of ornamental grasses, dwarf barberry, bird's nest spruce, heathers and heaths, forming a multi-textured mosaic of plum, green, and silver.

As a focal point, Corbin placed a honey locust tree in a free-form island of pea-stone gravel, encircling it with autumn glory sedum, yucca, and donkey's tail grass. A spill of juniper and bearberry cascades from the planter onto the gravel. On the bay side of the property, the mood shifts from controlled order to deliberate abandon, expressing the extent to which Corbin was enthralled by the sand and surf. Convinced there was nothing he could do to improve on the view of Provincetown across the harbor, he simply revegetated the sandy soil, scattering a mixture of wildflower seeds into beach grass "just for fun"—daisies, cosmos, brown-eyed Susans, poppies, and gallardia. "The idea is not to take away what nature left us, but to frame it, enhance it, imitate it," he said.

Gregory Morris, of Truro, uses native materials in his installations as well, but his powerful, dramatic compositions have less to do with copying nature than reinventing it as theater enlivened by sculpture and other architectural elements. A self-taught landscaper who has honed his indelible style over the past 25 years, Morris works by responding intuitively to a site. "I can't do a plan, but I can tell you exactly what your garden needs," he said. "It just appears to me—and it works."

The grounds of his own home serve as a showcase for some ideas. Guarding the driveway, a mammoth boulder signals a Morris garden must be nearby. Huge stones like these create a sense of serenity in Japanese gardens, suggesting the duration and omnipresence of natural forces. For Morris, boulders also serve to anchor gardens to the ground and give them specific personalities.

More surprises are in store near the house itself, beginning with a signature sculpture of old, weather-beaten locust stumps of random height. Other kinds of natural sculpture abound, includ-

ing some you can perch on: a massive low boulder Morris calls a "sitting rock," and a remarkably delicate, thin horizontal slice of stone supported by two similar small uprights. A sensuous apple tree stump that has acquired the mysterious patina of age looks hand-carved but actually was unearthed in North Truro. Two boulders are cunningly planted with creeping juniper which obliterates the space between them, giving the impression the plant is springing from the midst of a single huge rock.

Morris is partial to birches and weeping varieties of fruit trees as well as the weeping birch which he uses to highlight entrances. Ornamental grasses, heaths and heathers, as well as perennials recur in his plantings. In designing decks, he may group a tree, flowers, and shrubs into a cut-out portion, or set a rock garden directly onto the deck itself. He is fond of low, curving rock walls to help define a section of the garden, like a room in a house. "Gardens are like outdoor rooms," he declared, adding that he plants so that "every time you turn a corner, you see another room."

A particularly bold installation for a client in Truro makes a lasting impact: counterpoised against an expanse of lawn, a free-form gravel island serves as the base for two gigantic boulders. Twin clumps of bamboo sway to the left of the boulders, while another clump is poised to the right where its reedlike fronds caress the mammoth stone.

In a more playful mood, he created what another Truro client calls a "shower bower." Instead of building a conventional wooden enclosure for an outdoor shower, he fashioned a screen of bamboo and pampas grass framed by a sculptural cluster of locust stumps. Assessing the result the same way he judges all his installations, he said, "If it looks good, it's right. If it doesn't, it's not."

For **William Whitney**, a North Truro landscape designer with a master's degree from the Rhode Island School of Design, listening to clients helps determine what approach to take. "I ask what they want and then try to get them involved in the actual design, as well as in picking colors and shapes." Sometimes, he said, clients even help him plant. "It creates more excitement about the process as well as a sense of pride in the result."

In one such instance, the owner of a sprawling house in Provincetown, a pastiche of angles, semi-circles, and curves, worked steadily along with Whitney to bring the design to fruition. Some planted areas were rounded, but Whitney preferred the precision of straight lines and right angles in the outdoor spaces nearest the house, achieving a strong sense of formality.

A lawn framing a rectangular swimming pool is offset by asymmetrical wooden planters which contain unexpected juxtapositions. For instance, the improbable delicacy of a giant weeping cedar, shaped like a dinosaur's spine, is underscored by planting it alongside a sheaf of feathery ornamental grass. A skirt of miniature blue rug juniper (chosen to complement the bluish tinge of the tree) sits primly underneath.

Since you never can glimpse the entire picture at once in Whitney's gardens, walking through them helps capture some notion of the whole. Taking his cue from nature, he groups the same kind of plants together, then repeats the species at varied intervals. These rhythmically repeated materials generate a momentum that enhances the dynamic of connected masses. Still, the effect is random rather than deliberate. "I advise people to visualize throwing stones when they plant. The idea is never to plant on a straight line," he advised.

At another Provincetown site, he moved a driveway which had divided the place in half to one side, leaving inkberry bushes and shad trees intact. The finished design incorporates elements of formality and informality. A formal lawn is bordered by a white fence planted on both sides: from the house, you see an assortment of flowers and shrubs; from the street, a grouping of ornamental grasses. Contrasting with the lawn, a contiguous, informal arrangement of native plants—blueberry, rue, sumac, and bayberry as well as shad and cherry trees—is enclosed by a curved, low fieldstone wall laid dry.

There are hidden delights. Sloped down from the main property, a secluded patio is sheltered by a lattice fence, rhododendra, golden chain, and shad trees. "I like to play with spaces and have some surprises, like this secret garden," Whitney said. "It's part of the sense of mystery I always aim for."

Populating the Lower Cape with more trees is an objective **David Sullivan** keeps in mind, because he maintains they are a neglected aspect of landscaping. The Wellfleet designer, who holds a master's degree in landscape architecture from the University of Massachusetts, said this is partly because ornamental trees are in scarce supply here and partly because some homeowners opt for quantity instead of quality, choosing relatively inexpensive shrubs instead. But he claims that can be a mistake. "Native pines have a relatively short life span, so it's important to get big trees to replace them. If you had \$500 to spend, I would advise you to put in a quality tree with good topsoil."

Sullivan is intrigued by the challenge of revitalizing and renovating the grounds of older homes, and he finds that "people who live in those places are more in tune with landscaping than those with new homes who may be short of money and more concerned with the color of the tiles." In renovating the property of a 19th-century Truro home overlooking the Pamet River, Sullivan began a brick curving walk with an octagonal motif of the same material. The walk meanders through a lawn dominated by towering beech, locust, and Norway maple trees which may have been planted by the original owner. As a counterpoint near the house, Sullivan did his own take on an English cottage garden and crowded it with heaths, iris, hydrangeas, myrtle, and inkberry interspersed with miniature candy tufts.

Perhaps his most daunting challenge was to transform a jungle-like tangle of greenery in Provincetown into a stylized traditional Korean tea



DAVID SULLIVAN



WILLIAM WHITNEY

garden. After researching this Asian cultural icon, Sullivan devised a small exotic spot it takes some perseverance to reach, since you must climb a flight of steps, cross a path and descend another stairway to get there. A tea house and a threadleaf Japanese maple overlook the garden whose pond is refreshed by a bi-level circulating waterfall rimmed by boulders along the sides and at the base. A gigantic rock commands a diminutive freeform sandy beach outlining the pond's rocky shore.

The total unexpectedness of this unique miniature garden in Cape Cod terrain heightens its dramatic appeal. Yet now that Sullivan has met the challenge, he shrugs off his achievement. For him, it was one more instance of realizing a client's vision. ■

Joan Marks' article on three architects of the Lower Cape appeared last year in Provincetown Arts.

Augustitis

BY LOUISE RAFKIN

Dedicated to the incredibly talented and creative bunch of swell guys and gals who service this town each season. Please tip them well.

In late August I changed my bumper sticker. I scraped off "Follow Your Heart" and slapped on "Fuck You You Fucking Fuck." I had it bad. It was the end of a long day. It was hot. A woman I clean for left a message on my machine. It said, "You left two Cheerios in the sink." Later the same day a man at the restaurant asked me if the swordfish came whole.

The next night a guy sat in front of me at the movies. Actually he sat in front but over three seats from me. I was tired. I put my knees on the seat. I slunk down in my chair. I readied myself to fantasize being a fashion model in New York. The man in front and three down turned and hissed at me. "You are jiggling the seat," he said. "You should learn how to sit properly." I stared. A fag fashion designer flounced across the screen singing, à la Mary Tyler Moore, "Cause it's you girl and you should know it." As if on cue the hisser hissed again, "You, yes, you." Our eyes were still locked, mine in glossy bafflement. And then he rose and traipsed out to return with the owner who scolded me like a controlling schoolmarm. "The way you are sitting is bothering this man," she said. This was my day. This is our life.

The lie of the summer is martinis: face it, all you New Yorkers, you just want vodka straight when you order those very dry, four-olive Absoluts. You're not fooling us.

This summer identikit boys flocked the street in muscle T's and matching facial hair. A swarm of bees making for the hive, or rather, the gym. Pecs-R-Us in front of Spiritus, hot or cold, no matter what time of day or night. It seemed science had made a breakthrough in cloning technology.

One day while driving down the street, we spotted a gaggle of white girls with Jordache jeans and starched collars turned up. I said to my visiting out-of-town friend, "I'll bet you a burrito they're from Connecticut." My pal leaned out the window. "Hey," she said, "are you from Connecticut?" They burst into shrieks, "Yes! You too?" They shot their fists up in the air in what I assumed to be a right-on Connecticut salute.

How do you tell the ones from New Jersey? More than three inches of hair extends in every direction from any point on the scalp. Gold chains. And strands of leather with rainbow-colored pendants that read "Better gay than grumpy" and "Live life proud" and sadly—or thankfully—emerge only for Provincetown vacations.

Rainbow-colored anything is '80s. In 15 years it will be retro; until that time I think we should

petition the selectmen to make it illegal. And those with "shlong" hair—the short/long thing—should be shorn on sight.

And what about the ones who move here June 1st and consider themselves townies? You walk into a store and are greeted by one you have never seen before who starts to wax poetic about how great it is to live here. If you haven't lived here through two Februarys, don't even talk to me about the beauty of the Cape. A townie must have lived in at least eight different apartments, one of which has electric heat and no insulation. And if he or she hasn't been on anti-depressants, he or she must have been at least a bit concerned about serotonin uptake. But what about the unidentified blonde who flyered us at Herring Cove? "All the townies will be there," she said, pushing her neoned ware on a group of us, the most recent arrival being myself—having lived here six years. "Everybody loves townies, us townies are really cute."

"Who was that?" said Linnie, who has lived here all her life.

"Dunno," said Susie. "Never seen her before."

She was cute, we granted her that, but none of us had ever seen her before and I'll bet she's gone by Labor Day.

I got a puppy. Walking down the street with a puppy is like walking through a gauntlet of toddlers. Everyone is reduced to baby talk. They point and immediately burst out, "Puppy!" as if you didn't know what was on the end of the leash. Then they lean down and pet and pat and slobber and it's actually rather sweet unless you want to get anywhere. Then it is annoying. "Puppy," screamed the eight-thousandth young lad in a muscle T-shirt, and my Tourettes-afflicted girlfriend exclaimed, "Faggot!" He stopped mid-pat.

I don't know where that mime went but I personally couldn't get a good night's sleep when she was around. That creepy doll one. A slogan for bumper stickers: "Make Mime a Crime."

Augustitis could be better endured if there was something—and not a rainbow—at the end of the schlep. I suggest a leap-week between August and September. A whole week of good weather and no work and no tourists. Catered by the snooty Manhattanites who run that overpriced eatery in downtown Truro—the folks who do a reverse Robin Hood every summer, scooting off-Cape with piles of dough the nano-second dusk falls on Labor Day weekend. Townie week. Rent-free, no condo changeovers, and no mimes. We need to make it happen. ■

Louise Rafkin, a part-time housecleaner and waitress, is writing a collection based on her jobs, Dust to Dust: A Cleaning Odyssey, forthcoming from Algonquin Books.



The Siberia Connection

BY SETH ROLBEIN

Watching a play ferment into an international performance piece, being there when a Wellfleet brew poured into a Russian shot glass—that's what really got me about tromping through Siberia with Kevin Rice.

And as we walked through the blue metallic light and white snowpowder of Yakutsk, or felt our way along the dark backstage labyrinth of the Russian Dramatic Theatre, or crouched beside a black fishing hole cut through silver ice thickened by temperatures of 20 below zero, I'd remember what Don Juan told Carlos Castaneda: *The first step in conscious dreaming is to find your hands, find your hands and stay in your dream.* So I'd find my hands, like long lost mummy fingers wrapped in two pairs of gloves. I'd stare at them pink and cold and cramped, and then look up—and still be in Siberia. It was easy for me, because this wasn't my dreaming. I was along for the ride. I had been conjured up just like everything else about this wild scene. This was Kevin Rice's dream-come-real, this outrageous perestroika performance piece. I had been invited into the conscious dream of an unknown playwright who left the Wellfleet woods with enough audacity and tenacity to become the first American ever to direct on the national stage in Yakutsk, coldest city in the world, capital of the Republic of Yakutia, Siberia, Russia, the former Soviet Union.

The play—and here I use the word not in its theatrical sense, but more the way a hustler might, or a card player, or a guy making a pass at a girl—the play began two years ago. Of course it had to start with a play—and here I mean staged drama, as in Hamlet's "the play's the thing." The thing for Kevin Rice was *Siberian Summer*, written in 1994. At first it felt more like

a stew than a brew, thick and chunky, two acts of modern Americana. The true story of a Cape Cod guy who robbed a bank, and wound up a prison suicide, proved inspiration. So did Kevin's long-standing fascination with Russia, particularly with the mystery and potential of the vast region we call Siberia.

A woman was written in to the play who came from Yakutia, and was Sakha, as the native people call themselves. She was connected to her ancient traditions even as she studied banking. She became this Cape Cod guy's last best hope, a romantic potential, a possible escape that proved mirage.

The character, Lena, soon made demands on Kevin—a galling if typical state of affairs, like people making demands of their Creator. He felt he needed to go to Siberia, to make sure his take on her was plausible. Not for the exotic adventure, oh no, not at all. Art demanded. What can the artist do but pack his bags?

It was remarkable how effectively the Cold War, 14 time zones, and our self-absorption had turned Siberia into a cultural nonentity for East

August, 1994, his first words off the plane were, "She's coming. In a week, Margarita is coming."

Margarita Borisova, 37, had already acted in several movies and many plays. She is a product of the rigorous training that characterized the old Soviet system: years of Stanislavski and other methods, more years of hard travel and performance, a heavy diet of repertory repetition in Yakutsk (God bless you).

She needed all this preparation to play Lena. Why? Because, as Kevin put it that day at the airport, "There is one little catch: she doesn't speak English."

As it turned out, none of the actresses Kevin auditioned could, a small item which did not shatter his enthusiasm, or that of the Minister of Culture for the Yakutian Republic, Andre Savich Borisov. After meeting Kevin, and learning something of his intended production, Borisov was willing to pay all travel expenses to help solder this cultural connection.

"I love this guy," Minister Borisov would say. "Here he is, half way around the world, with an idea. He's no famous director, but he has a good play. This should happen."

"Kevin + Margarita = Play" read the headline in a Yakutian newspaper.

Margarita had less than four weeks to break through a language barrier that was three bricks thick. As a Yakut woman, she dreams in Sakha. Kevin knows no Sakha but is fluent in Russian, which she speaks as well because it was the "official" Soviet language of her childhood (Sakha was banned from schools for many years). And of course everything had to wind up in English for the stage of the Wellfleet Harbor Actors' Theatre,

where *Siberian Summer* had its world premiere in the fall of 1994.

"I'm crazy," Kevin murmured more than once in the weeks before opening night. Margarita listened to tape recordings of her lines, saw flash cards, rehearsed many hours a day. When she wasn't working, she often retreated into an exhausted sleep. Sometimes she was mouthing what for her were meaningless sounds, learned by rote. Her fellow actors would repeat lines of hers if they thought she was unintelligible. Kevin rewrote sections of the play to involve more mime and choreography, to introduce the Sakha language as a device.

"We all respected her as an actress immediately," said Dan Joy, who played the lead role of Billy in the production. "In terms of rehearsals, and the work ethic, we all speak the same language. My frustration is in not being able to communicate with Rita, the person, as opposed to the actress."

There was frustration on stage, too, but far less than the situation seemed to demand. Margarita managed to be mostly intelligible, but what really saved her performance was her com-



KEVIN RICE AND SETH ROLBEIN IN SIBERIA

Coast Westerners. In preparation for his trip, Kevin and I rummaged through Harvard's Widener Library, looking for books about the Sakha language; the only one we found in the entire university was written by a man who confessed he had never heard the language spoken. An old *National Geographic* showed pictures of women in bikinis, sunbathing beside giant icebergs (being white—the women, that is—they had their tops on). Rumors of environmental disasters murmured through occasional articles, alongside brags about gigantic reserves of gold, diamonds, and timber. Ancient oral traditions, shamanic religious figures, tundra and taboo—it was all obscure and dreamlike.

But Kevin's mission had become quite specific. "What do you think about the idea of me bringing back a Yakutian actress to play the role of Lena?" he asked. It was not really a question, it was a statement of intent. If the play was about a Siberian connection, why not really go for it? Why stop at the confines of the stage?

The whole idea seemed outrageous, but then again, there was Kevin with a round trip ticket in his hand to Yakutsk, a city which sounded more like a sneeze than a place. And when we met him at Logan Airport on the return in late



WEST END ANTIQUES

•
consistent quality
surprising variety
•

146 Commercial Street
(508) 487-6723

The Hawthorne School of Art

29 Miller Hill Road, Provincetown
(508) 487-1236 • 1-800-383-7476

The Hawthorne School of Art was established almost 100 years ago by the painter Charles Hawthorne, who was mostly responsible for creating Provincetown as an art colony. He was drawn to the beauty, unusual light and remote location of the small fishing town, choosing the top of the highest sand dune for his Studio School to sit on. Last year we reopened his studio for experimental art. Built in 1899, it still has its original charm and contains 25 built-in artist cupboards, old model platforms, 12 easels and huge 15' x 15' north light window. A stairway and lovely natural trails connect it with wonderful gardens, its own sand dune, wild heather, blueberries, and vast sea views from the highest point.



Summer School
Cape Cod by the Sea

LITTLE GORGEOUS THINGS

FEATURING
CHRISTOPHER
RADKO

also featuring
Limoges boxes

Pysanky eggs by
local artist Paul Wirhun

Meyda Tiffany animal lamps
Decorative mirrors
Miniature collectibles

Merchants' Hall

359 Commercial • 487-6171

mand of technique, her use of every nonverbal trick in the method-acting book. The other actors supported her, sometimes covered for her. The play came off. Audiences "got it." Reviews were good.

Borisov called for a progress report and wanted Margarita to tell him something in English. "Oh, the traffic!" she exclaimed into the phone. "I have seen crippled reindeer move faster than these cars!" It was a line from the play, of course. The Minister had a line of his own (spoken in Russian): "Let's strike while the iron is hot. Kevin should come here to Yakutsk and produce his play."

Irons cool over the course of a year, but the offer held. By September, 1995, Kevin Rice was in Yakutsk, working out a Russian translation of a rewritten version of "Siberian Summer." His new cast brought together two Russian actors, a Russian actress, and Margarita as Lena once again. The Russian Dramatic Theatre would celebrate its 75th year by hosting an American director and an American play. For a city that as recently as 1987 was basically off limits to Yankee imperialists, this was an astounding expression of perestroika at work.

"You can see I'm an old man," said Ivan Ivanovich Podoinitsyn, director of the theater, shaggy white hair framing a classic Russian face. "I was a Communist, I *am* a Communist. Even though I visited America in the '60s, it's hard for me to imagine that an American producer would invite a Yakutian actress to act in his production in America, or that we would invite an American producer here. It is very hard to understand."

Meanwhile, Kevin's appearance wasn't the only "first." For Margarita Borisova, a Sakha, to act on the Russian dramatic stage was major news in Yakutsk. Although Russians and Sakha co-exist in the republic, there is a good deal of cultural separation and tension between them. The creative status quo expresses the situation: This small city has two theaters. One is Sakha, one is Russian. They are a few blocks and a world apart. They produce plays in different languages, for different audiences, with different casts.

We easily understand the leap Margarita made in coming to America, but the leap cross-town, crossculture, was in some ways just as big. "I would be happy if it happens that I help unite Russian and Yakutian people by acting on the stage of the Russian Dramatic Theatre," she said. "Now, after this play, I think that Sakha people will go to the Russian Dramatic Theatre, and that's significant. And Russian audiences will go to the Sakha Dramatic Theatre."

"What I'm thinking about is how strange this whole thing is," said Sasha Pakhomov, a Yakutian who helped Kevin translate his play into Russian. "Here's Kevin Rice, an American citizen and director very much interested in Yakutia. Now theoretically, I can say I'm very interested in Brazil, or Peru, but he made his dreams, his interests, come true. This is incredible that he's here. And even more, that he's uniting two different nations. They live together in the same town, but there was no cultural collaboration."

"A lot of it was just plain luck," says Kevin. "There's been a rebirth of interest in cultural values in the last eight years because of perestroika, and the Sakha people have been able to re-embrace their own culture on a new level. The character in my play does just that. So to a certain extent my play fed on stuff happening anyway, crystallized it, and focused it on the Russian Dramatic Theatre."

The frustration of language in Wellfleet was replaced by the frustration of bureaucracy in Yakutsk. Communism (like Elvis) might not really be dead. Decades of Communist rule have left dense, deeply-rooted thickets which make almost any kind of movement difficult. Building the stage, finding props, setting the lights, nailing down audio cues, sticking to any schedule, getting paid—every step seemed to take more energy than it should, like wading through something thick but invisible.

"It's the *mashtab*," Kevin would mutter, using a Russian word which means something like "infrastructure," an industrial-strength bureaucracy and legacy. Yet one on one, over and over, people would help find ways around and through, would get it done with a compassion and humor that usually included a toast of vodka somewhere along the line.

Opening night in late October became opening weekend with three performances, all sold out, about 400 seats per show. The audience was a mix of Russian and Sakha, actors and artists mingling with government officials, soldiers, students, journalists. There were moments of tension in the house: The opening scene (a telephone monologue) seemed to confuse people. The Sakha crowd was rooting hard for Margarita, while some of the Russian crowd felt uncomfortable with lines spoken by Russians (ostensibly playing Americans) warning of the exploitation and rape of Siberia—many Sakha feel the Russians have done just that. There were questions which lingered after the performance: Why is this American spiritually exhausted to the point of suicide? Why does he see a Sakha woman as his only salvation, rather than finding strength (or love) in his own culture?

All of which really meant one thing: The play came off. Audiences "got it." *Siberian Summer* has now moved into the repertory rotation of the theater, where it will be performed periodically for many months, perhaps years. It may tour through other parts of Russia as well.

"Thank you, Kevinrice," said Andre Savich Borisov from the stage during curtain call on opening night, pronouncing the name as most everyone in Siberia seemed to, as one word. Kevinrice returned the thanks in both Russian and Sakha, and, with a bow, ended the evening.

Given the bouquet of roses in his arms, there was no need for him to look for his hands. ■

Seth Rolbein is a writer and documentary filmmaker.

The Preservation of the Dead in the Age of Sanitary Landfill

BY MARGARET CARROLL-BERGMAN

My vocation began to unfold in my youth. I was 10 years old when I was investigated for stealing the clothes off a cadaver.

Captain Willie Bow of the Nantucket Police Department stood in the middle of my parent's living room and stared at the number on the black football jersey I was wearing. "You're being questioned for tampering with evidence in a murder investigation," he told me. I nodded.

"Where did you find the jersey and pants?"

"On the beach, near Miacomet."

While I studied Captain Bow's notebook, he studied me.

"On a body?" he asked.

My brothers wore stupid grins and my sisters looked frightened. It was becoming clearer to me that I must be in the wrong.

"On the beach."

"And your story is that the day after you found the clothes, you found the body?"

"Head. I found the head."

"Didn't you know you were stealing?"

"No. They were on the beach." It seemed a reasonable explanation and I stuck with it.

The adults went into the kitchen.

"How long dead?" Dad asked.

"Three days."

"In this heat?" Dad considered. "The smell burns your throat." Dad was a district attorney. He knew. "Not many grown men can stomach that smell."

My two sisters, four brothers, and I exchanged looks of disbelief: Dad was calm.

"Your daughter is dressed in the shirt and pants belonging to the victim."

"She was beachcombing, Bow."

My parents and Captain Bow came back into the living room. Dad was drying his armpits with his undershirt. Bow tapped his notebook shut with his pen. "Say, Bow," Dad said, "that looks like my fountain pen."

"Could be," he answered. "I found it at the dump."

The notebook looked like one of Dad's, too—the leather-bound one he threw out after one of my brothers autopsied a bluefish on it.

"Hey, Margaret," Captain Bow said cheerfully. "You ought to try the dump."

This is how I discovered the Nantucket landfill, the largest open-air market for 30 miles. It had been a well-guarded secret, the catacomb of island life. Most Nantucketers used clamming rakes to dig in the dump's fertile soil or to retrieve things out of their reach. Carpenters scrounged scrapped lumber. Old ladies dressed in foxtails to pick over cleared-out estates. Merchants stocked their shops with salvaged "antiques."

It wasn't the constant smell of rosemary in bloom, or the laughing seagulls, or the camaraderie of the other pickers which drove me daily,



MARGARET BERGMAN WITH C. 1850 WAX HEAD
PHOTO KEITH BERGMAN

sometimes twice daily, to the dump; it was the quality of the garbage which kept my romance strong.

I salvaged rare books, lightship baskets, Tony Sarg oils, antique furniture, crystal chandeliers, Oriental carpets, ermine collars, and sterling tea services from the churning epicenter of the island.

I sold or gave away most of what I hauled out of the dump, except a wax-work head I found in a box of pasted-over whaling logs. The logs I gave to the museum. The head I kept. The head was in good condition, with human hair, eyelashes, brows and teeth. According to the logs, it was the head of Elizabeth Starbuck Macy. Her husband took it along whenever he captained a whaling ship. There was no record of the teeth, nor the mouth they came from.

It occasionally happened that an arm or a foot appeared at the landfill, usually mixed in with a bag of recyclables. A finger might be cut off in the rigging of a commercial fishing boat or a hand lost to a band saw. It was called medical waste. Anyone could dump for free, even off-islanders, and it was just a matter of bringing the appendages to the island. One time a Canadian tannery dumped a kettle drum of arms and legs. The smell caused flies to die in mid-air. An off-island mortician flew over the dump in a crop dusting plane and sprayed embalming fluid as if it was insecticide. Whenever a human member was found, the state sanitarians came to the island, locked the gates for a couple of days, conducted an investigation, and covered everything with six inches of loam.

A school teacher who is famous for scavenging recyclables from the public garbage cans in

town claimed she found a left hand rolled up inside a Persian rug. She cleaned the carpet, sold it, and financed a trip to Italy with the proceeds. But I always thought she circulated the hand story to scare off other people from seizing hand-knotted rugs.

Sunday morning was the best time to go to the dump. No one was there and the pickings were good. Early one Sunday, I was sitting in my truck on top of the trash heap, watching the flies struggling on the insect strip hanging from my mirror. The landfill attendant was off duty and the gates were closed, but unlocked in case a summer person catching the boat needed to get rid of some last-minute trash.

A pink Cadillac rammed the gates. The driver of the car, a woman in her early 50s, elegantly dressed in a white silk suit, jumped out of the car and tossed a large carton over the fence.

After she left, I drove down the hill to get the box.

Experience had taught me makeup would not be in a box labeled "Mary Kaye Cosmetics," but I was curious. Who was the woman in the white suit?

Three white cloisonné funeral urns were inside the carton and tucked inside each urn was a packet of ashes, a wedding announcement, and an obituary notice. According to the clippings, the mystery woman was the much-married and widowed Countess Rosemary Bassett. Was she making room for husband number four?

Fifteen years had passed since Captain Bow came to our house in Surfside to investigate the murder of Marian White, a New Bedford girl, ditched overboard from a fishing trawler into the Atlantic.

The night Captain Bow came to the house my sisters kicked me out of bed and I slept on an army cot in the "barracks," the porch where my brothers slept, and was pestered into the night by them for a full and accurate description of the dead girl. A couple of rats from the sewer pit, a mile and a half mile away, ran across the porch. We spent the rest of the night throwing sneakers and sandals at the rats.

What possible explanation could I offer for stealing the dead? I had to get rid of these urns. I crossed the parking lot to the trash pit. A strange feeling came over me, a feeling I was being watched by a higher power, a feeling psychologists describe as paranoia. As I raised my arm to throw the jar into the open garbage pit a voice called, "Stop!"

I turned to see a man in wing-tip shoes striding over a hill of wind-blown litter. "You'll jam the shredder."

What?" I nervously held the urn. The other two were at my feet. The sun was shining in my eyes and his face was in the shadow.

"Keith Bergman, Town Manager, Town of Nantucket," he said. "That's white metal, isn't it?"

"Cloisonné."

The town manager took an urn and regarded it as if it were a rare gem. "It will cost the town money to crush this. Twenty dollars."

"How much?" I blinked.

"But there's no fee," he said flatly. "Just dispose of it properly in the white metal pile."

"Beyond the car batteries and old paint cans," I finished.

"Right." He brightened. "I'm making a study of the dump."

"A study of the dump?"

"What would you think of white wooden gates at the entrance instead of the metal ones?"

"Sounds heavenly."

"Imagine a rolling Connecticut lawn and a scallop shell drive where we're standing."

I looked around the 50 acres of rat holes and flies.

"The landfill is the town's largest use of green space."

Bergman had bright red hair. I had freckles. What would our children look like?

He put each urn back in the box and walked me to my truck. "I'm sorry, but the dump is closed Sundays," he said. "I didn't get your name."

I was lying in the labor and delivery room of the Nantucket Cottage Hospital giving birth to Keith Bergman's second daughter, when, during a particularly painful contraction, he asked me to consider a move to Provincetown. The doctor took a knife to my private parts and my husband took my hand.

"This is the most thrilling moment of my life," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"It's a chance to become the town manager of a town that is in danger of losing its sanitary landfill."

"Aaaargh!" I cried.

"I see it as a real challenge," he said as he helped a big nurse pull my legs apart.

"Ahhh," I groaned. The baby's head was crowning. The big nurse told me to push.

"Provincetown leases the Seashore land for its dump from the National Park Service. This is the last year of a 25-year lease."

"Dump? National Park? Seashore?" I asked. The doctor and the nurse told me to focus. "Take it!" I cried, and the nurse handed Keith Bergman a beautiful baby girl.

We have lived in Provincetown for six years and although there is a happy ending to the Provincetown landfill story, there were some dark moments.

"Drop dead," said the voters of Truro.

Many of the residents of Truro are transplanted Provincetown natives. They sleep in Truro, but live in Provincetown. Their ex-

spouses, their children, their parents reside in Provincetown. However, no amount of love or money could move Truro voters to take Provincetown's trash, not even on a temporary basis, while Provincetown was building its own transfer station. If a community can be judged by the trash it throws out, can a town be judged by the trash it rejects?

Ever since Truro spurned Provincetown's trash, I have been obsessed with Truro's upscale landfill. Even on Nantucket the dump had an open gate policy. I knew the troubling story of the Truro dumpkeeper who tracked down the owner of a landfilled mink coat to return the fur because the owner was not a Truro resident.

"That was a \$400 coat," the retired dumpkeeper said, "and that was in 1965."

I searched my house for high-class trash, but nothing was tony enough for the Truro landfill. The recent and much-publicized auction of Dorothy Parker's ashes made me reconsider. Maybe the three late husbands of Countess Bassett would be worthy of the Truro landfill. There was only one way to find out. I borrowed a car with a Truro dump sticker and put the box in the back seat.

Right from the start, I had great respect for Truro. It was the first sanitary landfill which actually felt sanitary, like a suburban shopping mall, all plastic and temperature controlled.

Someone rigged up a public address system near the dump-sticker checkpoint and music from the Big Band era floated over the trash. Impressed by my interest in the sound system, the attendant told me the town also used its newly built transfer station for dances and other social functions.

I parked in the lot near the Swap Shop, also known as Truro's "Free Store" and entered the building with my box of urns.

"This Is Your Shop," read the message on the chalkboard in the lobby of the Swap Shop. "Do Not Take Things to Sell at Yard Sales or the Wellfleet Flea Market." The warning put me off balance. Not only did Truro not take trash from Provincetown, it was proprietary about Truro's trash not being sold in Wellfleet.

I was fearful of being spotted as Mrs. Keith Bergman and run out of the dump. The Swap Shop bustled with Provincetonians posing as Trurorians. An East End art dealer and his octogenarian father were trying on suit jackets; a chef was pocketing a set of salt shakers; a Provincetown jeweler was cutting out the bottoms of old sofas to look for rings; and an heir to a sizable white-bread fortune was pawing through the underwear bin.

The Swap Shop was stocked with size 56 girdles, 20-year-old textbooks on psychiatry and internal medicine, a room-size gorilla with an F.A.O. Schwartz tag, a copy of Mary McCarthy's *The Group* with the words "Not true" and "She always was so pious and sanctimonious" inked in the margins, and an undertaker's coat and top hat. The sign in the lobby was misleading. Everything was marked with a makeshift pricetag as if it had failed to sell at the most humble of rummage sales. It was the store of last resort. I

stood near the door and wondered where I should put the urns.

"If you need any help, ask me. My name is Woofie." Woofie looked like a beauty school graduate from a state correctional facility. Her hair was an institutional silver.

Two blue-haired women, both in their 60s, helped Woofie sort through the plastic bags and cartons left on the table. Whenever one of the women found a broken picture frame or a stained linen towel, she brought it to Woofie.

"Bring that out to the car, hurry," Woofie ordered the woman who seized a box of chipped juice glasses from a man entering the shop.

"I'll help you load that entertainment center onto my car rack," Woofie told the other woman.

I did not understand the relationship between Woofie and her centurions, but I know that in kennel society there is always a top dog.

Woofie pulled at one of my urns. "I see you have a treasure."

A bearded man stuffed two boxes of kitchen supplies under the table. "We're leaving Wellfleet for the winter," he said cheerfully.

"Give it to the Salvation Army," Woofie was angry. "Truro doesn't need your junk."

While they argued, I took the opportunity to unload the urns. At first I was going to leave the metal jars in the box and walk out the door, but I remembered the ashes. I wanted to get rid of the cloisonné urns, but it didn't feel right leaving the deceased in Truro's Free Store. I took the cremated remains out of the urns and set them in the Mary Kaye box on the new donation table. My plan was to give the husbands a proper send off on the seashore.

As I turned to pick up the box, my friend Carol slapped me on the back. "Have you seen Mimi Van Ausland?" she asked. "I swear I saw her pull in here."

"You followed her off Route Six?"

"Mimi is a woman of wealth and taste," Carol said. "She has the best garbage in town. I'm going to check the scrap metal heap and the clean-wood pile. Maybe she's there."

I reached for the box of ashes on the table. It was gone.

"Just what I need," said Woofie. She was holding the box of cosmetics to her chest and talking to her two helpers. "Facial mud. Here's one for you." She offered a bag to one woman. "And one for you." And she gave a bag to the other.

"Is this a hot pack or a cold pack?" Woofie asked me. "There aren't any instructions. What water temperature do you mix these with?" She was holding up a bag of ashes to her face.

"Body," I said.

"Thank God for the landfill," said Woofie. "I've found enough stuff here to last a lifetime." ■

Margaret Carroll-Bergman, the wife of Keith Bergman, town manager of Provincetown, is a freelance journalist and writer.



MARJORIE CONN AS LORENA HICKOK



THE CAPE PLAYHOUSE IN DENNIS



"30 THOUSAND PIGS ROAM THE CITY"



BEVERLY BENTLEY

C.A.P.E. Theatre

Women Who Dare is Marjorie Conn's theme. Founder and Artistic Director of C.A.P.E. Theatre, Conn performs and writes about women who have dared to go beyond the ordinary. Last season, she brought Lizzie Borden to stage with a debut of her play **Miss Lizzie A. Borden Invites You For Tea**. The play draws on the historical and hysterical elements of a celebrity defendant years after her trial. The setting is Borden's garden where you are invited for tea to hear her side of the murder matter. Continuing to create new material in Provincetown, Conn brings another debut play to the stage this year, **THAR SHE BLOWS! Disguised As A Boy She Went A-Whaling**. The play is derived from Conn's research and interest in nineteenth century women and their roles in the whaling industry. The ethics of the practice of whaling, the risks of shipboard romance, and the grueling challenges of sea life are told by one character who stowed away on a whaling vessel and found the unexpected. Written by Pat Bond, **Lorena Hickok & Eleanor Roosevelt: A Love Story** will be performed again by Conn. This spring Conn performed the play at the Annual Gay and Lesbian Berkshire Festival. The audience of two hundred gave her a standing ovation. **30 Thousand Pigs Roam the City** is a musical comedy that comes to Provincetown after a successful run at Wings Theatre in Greenwich Village. Newly single roommates, Sean and Evan, confront the mine field of gay dating in the '90s and navigate their way through an urban circus of piano bar camp, leather blunders, gym mania and phone sex. When our heroes find themselves romantically involved with one another, it's either the affair of the century or the next World War. Written by Bill Baumer and Ed Stevens, "Pigs" score is composed by Dean Meyers, a veteran of pop and classical music, and directed by Bart Murell. **Calling the Great White Shark, Too**, storyteller Jim Wolf weaves dramatic tales and local legends as he encounters the Great White Shark in the foggy darkness of Cape Cod Bay. All C.A.P.E. Theatre Productions are held July and August on the waterfront at the Provincetown Inn, One Commercial Street. Call 487-2666 for more information.

Cape Playhouse in Dennis

Raymond Moore founded the Cape Playhouse in Dennis as a way of fulfilling his dream to bring Broadway to Cape Cod. The theater's polished rustic interior carries the scent of summer stock revivals and echoes the voices of many stars like Bette Davis, Geraldine Page, George Gobel and Christopher Reeve. Celebrating its 70th season this year, the Playhouse has booked a full schedule of shows from late June to mid-September. Part of the season's line up includes old standards, opening with **Brigadoon**, the Broadway musical by Lerner and Loewe, then later with **Angel Street**, a Victorian thriller which inspired the movie **Gaslight**. Making a US premiere **Love, Julie** by Australian writer Patrick Edgeworth will be performed through July.



KEN THOMAS AS WILL WHITMAN



HOLLY HUGHES



DAN MARTIN AND MICHAEL BIELLO



DAN MARTIN

Helen Reddy, the famed singer of "I Am Woman Hear Me Roar," will star in the production along with Playhouse favorite Millicent Martin. The comedy deals with unfaithful husbands, distant children and the possibility of love two friends share at mid-life crossroads. **Five Guys Named Moe** will bring jazz to the stage, while Sundays in July and August offer everything from Celtic folk to string quartets. For more information call 508 385-3911.

Provincetown Repertory Theatre

A professional equity theater goes into its second season with a repeat performance, but not exactly. After the success of Joe Pintauro's one-act plays produced last year at Town Hall, artistic director Ken Hoyt has chosen another Pintauro play for this season. **Men's Lives** is the story of a fishing village family that is struggling to survive during changing times. Based on Peter Matthiessen's memoir, the play relates to Provincetown as a place with a seafaring history. The production will be at Town Hall for the last two weeks in July under the direction of Christopher Smith. Continuing with local history as a theme, Provincetown Rep is producing two early one-acts by Eugene O'Neill, **He** and **The Long Voyage Home**. The plays have been selected to run in celebration of the 80th anniversary of O'Neill's first productions with the Provincetown Players. Directed by Jose Quintero, a Tony award winning director who is associated with the revival of **Summer and Smoke**, **The Ice Man Cometh**, and **Long Days Journey into Night** on New York stages. The plays will be performed the first two weeks of August at the Pilgrim Monument and Museum at High Pole Hill in conjunction with an exhibition of artifacts and rare letters related to O'Neill. This is the first time that the Museum will be used as a theater. Call 487-0600 for further information.

O'Neill-by-the-Sea

As part of the enthusiasm surrounding the 80th anniversary of O'Neill's debut in Provincetown, Stephen Murphy presents The New York O'Neill Project with members of the Provincetown Theater community. The idea is to create a festival of local theater with readings and performances at the Art Association. The summer schedule includes **Bound East for Cardiff** and **Beyond the Horizon**, O'Neill's Pulitzer Prize winning play. Other early Provincetown Players works are also on the reading list: **Not Smart** by Wilbur Steele and **Freedom** by Jack Reed. This is revival of Provincetown theater lore, back when audience chairs were turned around as a way to change the set. The readings are free and open to the public. Audience members are encouraged to bring potluck meals to feed the actors for their efforts.

Provincetown Art Association

After last year's success, local equity actors Beverly Bentley and Guy Strauss are reviving

their production of **Love Letters**. The play details the changing relationship between a childhood sweetheart and an upper-crust WASP. Their relationship is revealed through the reading of a series of letters which span their lifelong friendship. Bentley and Strauss will be reading at the Art Association in August.

Provincetown Theater Company

The longest running name in local theater, the Provincetown Theater Company plans to reactivate itself this year with productions, workshops, and a playwriting competition. A recipient of funding from the Schoolman Trust, the Company has hired an artistic director, Roger Cacchiotti, who hails from the University of New Mexico. Beginning in July, the Company brings Holly Hughes to town with her performance of **Clit Notes**, a one-woman show with an Obie award to its credit. Hughes was one of the NEA Four and faced rejection due to the lesbian content in her work. Her performance will be at the Mayflower Room in the Provincetown Inn the beginning of July. Hughes and partner Ester Newton have finished a book: **Fire Island**, which will be out this summer. Alternating nights throughout July, the Company will stage **Agnes of God** and **A Mad Person's Chronicle of a Miserable Marriage** by local playwright Sinan Unel. The play gives account to the life and times of Leo Tolstoy and his marriage to Sonya.

In conjunction with the O'Neill Festival, the Company is performing **Bound East for Cardiff** and Wilbur Steele's **Not Smart**, both plays were first performed on the wharf in 1916 as the beginning of the Provincetown Players. In August, the Company is also producing a gay musical, **The Negative Room** at the Universalist Meeting House. In addition to productions, workshops for children are scheduled with local actor Melissa Becker. Cacchiotti intends to schedule productions up to December. Call 487-8673 for more information.

Universalist Meeting House

In its second year, the Meeting House Theater continues as a fund raising venue for the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House of Provincetown. Managed by Allan Gallant, the theater opens Memorial Weekend and runs various productions until the end of October. Though the pole at center stage still exists, the purchase of stage lighting and a sound board enhances the quality of staged events.

Premiering on stage in July is **Fairy Tales**, a musical of five simultaneous skits by Dan Martin and Michael Biello. Developed at the BMI Musical Theater Workshop in New York, **Fairy Tales** explores the relationships between gay men, their families, and the women in their lives. While blending forms of musical theater and performance art, the musical is meant to be a celebration of the gay spirit and vision. Performed by five actors in multiple roles, the production is directed and choreographed by Bill Castellino, who lists more than 20 stage productions to his credit.

Two other premieres are scheduled at the Meeting House: the musical comedy **Friends of Dorothy**, a two character spin-off of the **Wizard of Oz**, and **The Negative Room**, a comedy by local playwright Thomas O'Leary. Booked August through September, *The Room* is a comedy about dysfunction, recovery, dysfunction. O'Leary has won the Towngate Theater's Best Play of the Year award in West Virginia and been a finalist in the O'Neill Festival for playwrighting.

On stage at the Meeting House Theater, John Thomas will again perform his creation of "**Spontaneous Me: A Night with Walt Whitman**." The play is a solo performance by Thomas, who constructed the theatrical piece by excerpting material from Whitman's poems, letters, journal entries and criticism. The result is a long biographical poem that interweaves Whitman's life as a poet with his homoerotic nature. Both themes are set in the reality of living in the 19th century while the poet lives in the public eye and partakes in public service. The play also includes 40 minutes of music composed by John Thomas. The play will be on stage at the Meeting House August 8 through 17. For more information call the Meeting House Theater at 487-4253.

W.H.A.T

Under the artistic direction of Gip Hoppe and Jeff Zinn, the Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater has scheduled humor throughout their 12th season. **Durang Durang**, written by Christopher Durang and directed by Zinn, opens the season. The play is a spoof on conventional theater and famous American playwrights, like Sam Shepard and Eugene O'Neill. The humor continues with David Ives's **All in Timing**, a comedy acclaimed for its hysterical word play and unique use of English. Following will be Cambridge-based comic Jimmy Tingle performing a one-man show. If you remember, the last two years Tingle has performed at W.H.A.T. in **Uncommon Sense**. This year's show is planned to appear in New York and Los Angeles. In mid-September Gip Hoppe's play **Future Hollow** takes to the stage again. The W.H.A.T. production will be different from the spring production at **The Academy Playhouse** since Hoppe has re-worked the script, which looks at American life in a "modern" housing development. Also during the summer, but off the Cape, Hoppe's play, *Jackie, An American Life*, will be on stage at the Wilbur Theater in Boston. Sam Shepard's most recent play, **Simpatico** will close the season at W.H.A.T. in September. Call 349-6845 for schedule and reservation information. ■

HTTP://WWW.

CAPECODACCESS.COM

AT SHANK PAINTER

COMPANY INC.

e-mail:

spc@CapeCodAccess.com

508 487 1709

talk with Ewa

her computer never goes to sleep

CATÉ BLASÉ

Cindy Lauper enjoyed an ice-cold Aranciata here in 1982



. . . still on the menu.

PROVINCETOWN'S OUTDOOR CAFE

328 COMMERCIAL ST.

DINING OUT

WEST END

ALFREDO'S ON THE BAY • 487-9500

At the Provincetown Inn beachfront resort, located at the exact spot where the Pilgrims first landed, has a charming, slightly old-fashioned feel, reminiscent of its hey-day in the 1930's when city folk would visit Provincetown for the weekend in their new-fangled automobiles, complete with chauffeurs. In its second year, Alfredo's on the Bay features three-course Italian/American dinners from \$14.95, including a "Taste of Little Italy" where diners match their choice of pasta to their favorite homemade sauce. Alfredo, formerly head chef at Franco's and Stormy Harbor, has built up a local following for his delicious Italian specialties. Parking. Open June through the Fall.

THE RED INN • 487-0050 • Open year round

Dating from 1805, this is possibly the only traditional country inn on the waterfront in New England. Comfortable and elegant, with fine food and unrushed service to match the surroundings, the Red Inn features a selection of "Classic Cape Cod Cuisine" prepared with artistic flair using the freshest native seafoods and choicest meats. The dining area and tavern are right on the water for cooling sea breezes in summer, fireplace for off-season. Lovely gardens, waterfront decks, and terrific views of Long Point. Parking.

MARTIN HOUSE • 487-1327

Savor highly acclaimed American cooking with an eclectic, international flair next to one



*Casual Waterfront Dining
Featuring
Mediterranean Cuisine*

Wine & Beer

Fisherman's Wharf Marina

508-487-0900

Cafe Edwige
*Restaurant
and Gallery*
Serving Fine Food

BREAKFAST: Daily 8 to 1
SAT & SUN BRUNCH until 2
DINNER 6 to 10:30

"Edwige at Night"
Chef Steve Frappolli presents his unique style of modern American cooking. With pride he has created an original menu with innovative specials prepared from the freshest local ingredients and produce; both flavor and presentation are exceptional. Join us for an evening of dining pleasure.

333 COMMERCIAL ST.
487-2008



“
a romantic downstairs
dining room...
and
...a dynamite
waterfront setting...
make
...a sleek,
stylish backdrop
for some
mighty
interesting
fare
”

— Restaurants of New England —

THE MEWS WATERFRONT DINING

“
and an upbeat upstairs
with casual dining and
entertainment...
”

Café

MEWS

Brunch • Dinner • Entertainment — Café 'til 1am

429 Commercial Street • 487-1500

of five crackling fires from September through May or in a harborside garden during the warm months. Intimate, authentic 18th-century rooms provide a lovely and romantic setting throughout the year. Exceptional wine list and comprehensive selection of the most sophisticated spir-its available. Specializing in fresh, local seafood, creative vegetarian cuisine, and featuring Angus beef, range chicken, duck, pork, lamb, game. Recommendations include: *The New York Times*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Paris Elle*, *Yankee*, *AAA*, *Out and About*, *Genre*, *Boston Magazine*, and *Boston Globe*. Open year round.

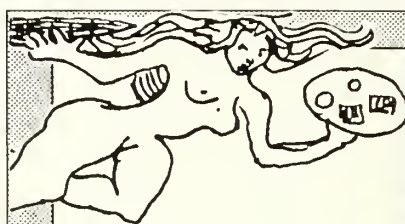
THE RESTAURANT AT THE BOATSLIP

• 487-2509 • Seasonal

A baby grand piano accompanies diners at The Restaurant, where owner/manager John Twomey returns for a second season. Serving Continental cuisine, everything from Herb Roasted Chicken to Pan Seared Lobster, with an attention to detail from the first course to the last. An extensive wine collection compliments the menu in the open air dining room with rustic details and views of the bay and the town. Breakfast, lunch and dinner, seven days a week during the summer season.

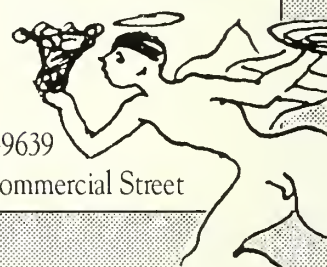
BUBALA'S BY THE BAY • 487-0773

This season still finds Bubala's painted bright yellow with birds on the roof and neon in the windows. Restaurant veterans John Yingling and Noreen Bahring have transformed this large dining area into a buzzing bistro with murals by artist James Hansen. Low lighting, water views, late night music, and the sidewalk cafe are other




Stellar coffees and breakfast all day, fresh sun-ripened fruit juices, celestial salads, heavenly hamburgers and a star-studded choice of spirits.

CAFE HEAVEN



487-9639
199 Commercial Street



Pucci's

HARBORSIDE RESTAURANT AND BAR

*Enjoy our waterfront enclosed deck with a spectacular view
of the harbor from Provincetown's East End.*

OPEN DAILY FROM 11:00 AM
539 COMMERCIAL STREET • PROVINCETOWN • 487-1964

The Restaurant at the Boatslip



Waterfront Dining
& Piano nightly

BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

*"Casual yet elegant...with
the finer aspects of dining"*

161 Commercial St
508-487-2509

physical features. Bubala's offers serious food at sensible prices. Late night fare and a lively bar. Open Spring to Fall. Parking.

SPIRITUS • 487-2808 • Long Season

Serving the best pizza in town, plus Haagen Daaz ice cream. Eat out front and observe the activity in the street, indoors at booths, or, in warm weather, enjoy the outdoor garden at the back. Popular with the bar crowd, it's open late, apres bar—the scene of "the scene."

TOWN CENTER

CAFE HEAVEN • 487-9639

A popular cafe which rivals the best New York has to offer. Breakfast is served all day, featuring fresh-squeezed juices; open for lunch and dinner, too. Ham, roast beef and turkey are freshly baked on the premises, cappuccino and espresso are the best in town, and all desserts are homemade, using plenty of seasonal fruits. "Hamburger Heaven" served nightly beginning Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day. Display of paintings by artist John Grillo. Full service bar. Sorry, no credit cards accepted.

LORRAINE'S • 487-6074 • Long Season

Owner/chef Lorraine brings tradition and flare to New American and Mexican cuisine for a third season. Handed down from her grandmother, third generation recipes remain staples to the menu where full, hot plates are served in the intimate dining room. Everything from Duckling Taquitos to Paella Espanola are offered, as well as a variety of other creative dishes to satisfy the palate. The booths are warm and cozy and frame monthly art exhibits. The full bar

The COMMONS Bistro & Bar

- Bistro Fare with a French Accent
- Provincetown's only Wood-burning Oven
- Gourmet Pizza and Fresh Native Seafood
- Rooftop Deck and Outdoor Dining in the Garden Courtyard



386 Commercial St., Provincetown
487-7800

PROVINCETOWN'S
ITALIAN
RESTAURANT

OPEN 7 DAYS • DINNER 6:00 ON
BAR UPSTAIRS • KILEY COURT
RESERVATIONS 487-0049

Ciò & Salís

Alfredo's

... on the Bay

Italian/American Specialty Restaurant

Full Dinners
from \$14.95

Full dinners include appetizer, garden salad, potato and vegetable or pasta, fresh bread & butter, coffee & dessert

"Taste of Little Italy"
\$14.95

Create your own Classic Italian dish—
Combine your choice of pasta (Fettuccine, Linguine or Penne) with your favorite sauce—
10 delicious homemade sauces to choose from

"A Taste of Little Italy" includes
appetizer, garden salad, fresh bread & butter,
coffee & dessert

Kiddie Korner: \$4.95

Landing Lounge Open Nightly

AT THE PROVINCETOWN INN

1 Commercial Street, Provincetown

Serving 5:30—9:00 PM

Blackboard Specials • Free Parking

RESERVATIONS: 487-9500

THE KIND OF PLACE YOU'VE
BEEN SEARCHING FOR...



DINNER
Every night in season
6 - 10:30

OPEN 'TIL 11:00
Friday & Saturday evenings

133 Commercial St,
Provincetown
487-4433

Free evening parking at Flyers Boat yard, in the rear

serves the best fresh squeezed lime Margaritas in town. Dinner is served nightly from 6 p.m. Late night Tapas until midnight. No reservations. MasterCard and Visa accepted.

FRONT STREET • 487-9715 • Long Season

A romantic and elegant bistro located in the brick cellar of a Victorian mansion, Front Street has a well-earned reputation as one of Provincetown's finest restaurants. Chef/owner Donna Aliperti provides an intriguing change of menu weekly, featuring continental cuisine prepared with the finest ingredients, complemented by an extensive wine list. Menu of Italian cuisine also available. Dinner until 11, bar until 1 a.m.

EURO ISLAND GRILL • 487 2505 • Seasonal

Once a church, then a movie theater, the Euro Island Grill has a style all its own. Exuding tropical charm, the Euro dishes up a unique blend of Caribbean and Mediterranean flavors. Enjoy lunch or dinner outside on the spacious patio one floor up overlooking Commercial Street, right next to Town Hall. Serving dinner until 10:30, light fare until 2 am, with excellent live entertainment—jazz, blues and reggae groups—at Club Euro throughout the season. Call for music schedule. Open May-October. A fun place, and great for people watching!

MOJO's • 487 3140 • Seasonal

Mojo's is as close as you can get to gourmet fast food. Try homemade fried potatoes (with skins on), batter-fried mushrooms, fresh seafood sandwiches and platters, homemade chili, hummus salad with sprouts. Eat at outdoor tables, or stroll across to the beach and enjoy your feast watching the fishing come and go. Efficient and friendly service. Open from 11 a.m. to midnight.

DANCING LOBSTER • 487-0900

Now in its third year, the Dancing Lobster is one of Provincetown's best kept secrets. Operated by the namesake of Pepe's Wharf, Pepe Berg has taken off by himself to open this delightful restaurant on the Fisherman's Wharf Marina. The surroundings are swish, the food sumptuous and the price is right—but they take no reservations and it's tiny, so first come, first served. A welcome addition to the town's culinary repertoire, and well worth a visit. Long season.

NAPI'S • 487-1145 • Open Year Round

Dubbed "Provincetown's most unusual restaurant," Napi's certainly has plenty on which to feast the eye as well as the palate. Owners Napi and Helen van Dereck have embellished their restaurant, built by Napi himself, with items from their extensive collection of Provincetown art and artifacts. The food is as unusual as the surroundings, featuring international, local and vegetarian cuisine, all prepared to the highest standards by Helen. Breakfast, lunch and dinner off-season, dinner ONLY in season. Parking.

LOBSTER POT • 487-0842 • Open all year

Owned and managed by the McNulty family, this bustling restaurant serves some of the best fresh seafood in town in a no-nonsense atmosphere where the main feature is what comes out of the kitchen. The service is friendly and efficient, so even when it's crowded, things run smoothly. Chef Tim McNulty's clam chowder won the Cape Cod Chowder Contest four years running. Try a cocktail at the "Top of the Pot," the second floor bar and outside deck with fabu-

Martin House

Food and Drink

Enjoy highly acclaimed American cooking with an international flair in one of our authentic 18th century rooms. Harbor views, five glowing fireplaces, and Provincetown paintings from the 1850's to the present provide a lovely, romantic setting throughout the year. Dinner served in our waterfront garden during the warm months. Recommended by the New York Times, August 20, 1995 and the Boston Globe, June 20, 1996. For reservations or copies of our menu, which changes seasonally, call 508-487-1327. 157 Commercial Street, on the Atlantic Street Landing, Provincetown

487-1327

Reservations Recommended

lous view of the harbor and fishing boats. Be prepared to stand in line on a busy nights, but the wait is well worth it. Just around the corner from Town Wharf, you can't miss the classic red neon lobster signs. Buy the Lobster Pot Cookbook—\$9.95.

CAFE BLASE • 487-9465 • Seasonal

The Town's most picturesque outdoor cafe, with pink and blue umbrellas, multi-colored paper lampshades gently swaying in the breeze, and colorful annuals in windowboxes abounding. The food is a touch more sophisticated than the usual with a definite European flair. A perfect place to sit in the sun, people watching, sipping a cool drink, or reading the Sunday papers; you'll also have the best view of the July 4th parade. On Commercial Street next to the Town Library.

CAFE EDWIGE • 487-2008 • Seasonal

The most popular breakfast place in town, with good reason: sample granola, omelettes, fresh-squeezed juices, frittatas, tortillas, garden salads, pancakes, fresh-baked Danish pastries, and more. In the evenings, Cafe Edwige transforms into "Edwige at Night" presenting the chef's unique style of modern American cooking featuring the finest of natural foods. Brunch until 2 p.m. Upstairs at 333 Commercial Street, across from the library.

EAST END

PEPE'S • 487-0670 • Seasonal

Owned and operated by the Berg family since 1967, Pepe's continues to serve the finest gourmet seafood, including bouillabaisse, lobster, and Portuguese dishes. Pepe's romantic atmosphere, European flair and beachfront location make this a special place to visit. Enjoy brunch or lunch in the waterfront dining room or on the upstairs deck overlooking the bay. Lunch and dinner.

THE COMMONS • 487-7800

This rambling property has been marvelously refurbished and revitalized in the last year. The menu features handmade gourmet pizzas from the wood burning oven, fire-roasted free-range chicken, fresh native seafood, and French-style Bistro grilled steak, as well as daily specials, including some vegetarian dishes. The emphasis is on fresh ingredients and flavorful preparations. The restaurant has a casual but sophisticated ambience with a dining room overlooking Commercial Street, as well as delightful canopied upper deck for outdoor dining in warmer weather. A bonus: fine wines by the glass, also cappuccino and espresso, and be sure to check out the tiny but friendly street-side bar. New this year is sushi bar daily on the deck from 4pm.

THE MEWS • 487-1500 • Open all year

The Mews, now in its third season in this wonderful waterfront location, continues to serve excellent food in elegant surroundings. Here you'll enjoy some of the best views of the bay from the dining room and upstairs deck overlooking the beach. Cafe Mews offers a more casual menu featuring small pizzas, pasta, and roasted chicken. The Mews is situated in Provincetown's renowned gallery district—browse through the galleries after dinner, most are open until 11 p.m. in season. Off-season, catch the popular Monday night open-mike performance series coordinated by Peter Donnelly.



LORRAINE'S

**NEW AMERICAN AND
TRADITIONAL MEXICAN FARE**

Open 7 Days

- Dinner Nightly 5:30 - Close
- Late Night Tapas from 10-12 *Every night*
- Serving Fresh Fish From our Local Waters

Specialties ~ Paella, Carnitas, Mujeres Clams...
come and try the flavors of Old Mexico & our Fabulous Margaritas

229R Commercial St., Provincetown
(508) 487-6074

Great Food...



The Flagship

RESTAURANT

*Magnificent Views
On the water at*

**Serving Breakfast
and Dinner**

Live Entertainment

Call for details

Susan Leven, Manager

Polly Hemstock, Chef

463 Commercial Street

(across from the Art Association)

487-4200

"The best seafood in all New England"



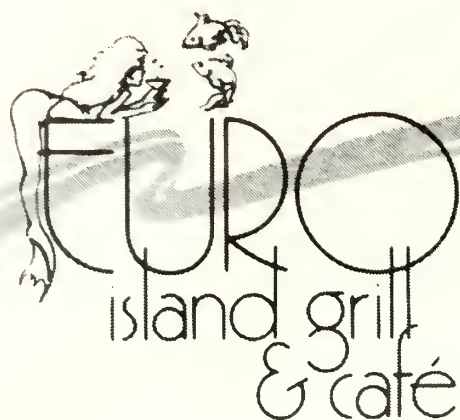
— Since 1967 —

Waterfront Dining

LUNCH • DINNER • OUTDOOR CAFE

Enjoy Lunch on our Top Deck

371 COMMERCIAL STREET • PROVINCETOWN • 487-0670



Serving Lunch & Dinner

Indoor & Outdoor Dining • Large Semi-Covered Deck • Northern Most Original Tiki Bar

CLUB CLUB
EURO EURO

258 COMMERCIAL ST • 487-2505

☞ ROOTS ☞ FROZEN ISLAND DRINKS ☞ REGGAE

CIRO'S • 487-0049 • Open all year.

Ciro's is Provincetown's best known restaurant, a romantic wine cellar serving an extensive menu of gourmet Northern Italian specialties. Enjoy dinner amid the worn flagstones and straw Chianti bottles downstairs, or join the convivial crowd for cocktails upstairs in the intimate lounge, accompanied by operatic arias. Owned and operated by the Cozzi family since the early '50s, the restaurant is now managed by Ciro's daughter Theo. Reservations are essential in season and weekends off-season; you'll find it down the alley at Kiley Court in the East End gallery district. Look for Ciro's cookbook in stores this summer.

THE FLAGSHIP • 487-4200 • Seasonal

Established in 1931, the Flagship is one of Provincetown's oldest restaurants with an atmosphere that seems haunted by Provincetown's nautical past. An East End favorite, The Flagship's chef Polly Hemstock brings her own special twist to traditional food preparations, creating a veritable feast for the senses. Right on the beach, there's a lively bar scene with entertainment.

PUCCI'S • 487-1964 • Seasonal

A delightful little cafe right on the beach in the East End serving a wide variety of snack appetizers, and main meals throughout the day until 12:30 a.m. The specialty is Pucci's Buffalo chicken wings, better than any other; also available are fresh seafood, char-broiled burgers, Mexican specialties, salads, and sandwiches. The atmosphere is friendly, casual and relaxed and prices are moderate. Drop by any time for wings and a beer, or a cocktail and a plate of appetizers. The bar is a lively meeting place for East-Enders.

MICHAEL SHAY'S • 487-3368

Shay's serves breakfast, lunch and dinner in a cozy, traditional New England atmosphere. Fresh seafood and char-broiled prime meats are a specialty, accompanied by selections from an excellent salad bar. Known for quality food at moderate prices. The early dinner specials—served 5-7 p.m.—are an excellent value. Open 8 a.m.-10 p.m. Parking. Open year round.

TRURO

ADRIAN'S • 487-4360 • Seasonal

This is Adrian's fourth season at the Outer Reach Resort, spectacularly located on a bluff overlooking Cape Cod Bay, just five minutes from Provincetown. This chef-owned restaurant serves innovative and creative food using the finest ingredients available. Try wood-fired brick oven gourmet pizza (voted "Best Pizza" by *Boston Magazine*), grilled meats and fish, bountiful breakfasts, or regional Italian appetizers and pastas. Desserts are baked on the premises. Dine on the outdoor deck overlooking the Bay. Always ample parking.

WELLFLEET

CAPTAIN HIGGINS • 349-6027 • Seasonal

On the town pier right next to the Wellfleet Harbor Actors' Theater, theatergoers can enjoy dinner here before the show or a cocktail afterwards. Featuring a wide selection of fresh seafood, raw bar, and children's menu, Captain Higgins offer good food at reasonable prices.



the
yellow
place
with
birds on
the roof

reasonable
prices

freshest
seafood

great wine list

fun dining
at its finest

*Enjoy martinis
from around the world*

*Enjoy all your favorites
Cafe Style*

all homemade foods

parking and
atmosphere to boot

BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER FROM 8AM

183 Commercial Street 487-0773

Efficient service, casual atmosphere, great location overlooking the Harbor, and deck for outdoor dining.

PAINTER'S • 349-3003 • Seasonal

Once the old Wellfleet Oyster House, now open its second season as Painter's, managed by Kate Painter, daughter of fiction writer Pamela Painter. Sure to be a fun place to visit in Wellfleet, Painter's offers "simple food in a funky place," though you might consider "simple" a touch modest when you peruse the tempting menu which seems to rove the world for ideas. To round off the meal, you can order the ultimate dessert: a pint of Ben & Jerry's with a scoop. Dinner is served from 5-11p.m. and the upstairs tavern's open until past midnight. You'll find Painter's on Main Street just off Route 6.

CAPTAIN

Higgins



SEAFOOD RESTAURANT

Town Pier, Wellfleet

Fresh Seafood • Raw Bar

Children's Menu

Cocktails • Fine Wines & Spirits

Scenic deck overlooking Wellfleet Harbor

OUTDOOR DINING

(508) 349-6027

THE LOBSTER POT

PERIOD

321 Commercial St, Provincetown • 487-0842

Red Inn

Provincetown's historic Inn on the waterfront, built in 1805, is located on the beach where the Pilgrims first set foot in the New World. Today the charm and elegance of the

Federalist Period have been restored affording you a vacation experience unsurpassed in Provincetown.

BRUNCH • LUNCH • DINNER

Reservations Recommended

LODGING

Each room and apartment is directly on the waterfront and has private bath, telephone, television. All are decorated with fine antiques and original works of art.

Ample parking in our lot.

Open All Year

15 Commercial St. Provincetown 487-0050

Front Street *a restaurant*

One of Provincetown's most innovative
Continental Cuisines and extensive wine lists.

Chef and owner Donna Aliperti
invites you to share an
evening of intimate dining in a
casual, elegant atmosphere.

RESTAURANT 'TIL 11 PM

BAR 'TIL 1 PM

230 Commercial Street

Provincetown

RESERVATIONS SUGGESTED

487-9715

WINE SPECTATOR
"Award of Excellence"

Michael Shay's

RIB & SEAFOOD HOUSE

Serving 8 meals a day, 7 days a week!

Early Bird Specials: \$10.95

4-7 p.m. / Sunday: Noon-7 p.m.

- Baked Stuffed Shrimp with Crabmeat Stuffing
- Baked Stuffed Sole topped with Lobster Newburg
- Roast Prime Rib with Yorkshire Pudding
- Marinated Charbroiled London Broil
- Vegetarian Lasagna

*Served with choice of rice or baked stuffed potato,
selections from our huge homemade salad, and bread*

Friday Nights

All-you-can-eat Fish or Clam Fry: \$7.95

Sunday Turkey Dinner: \$7.95

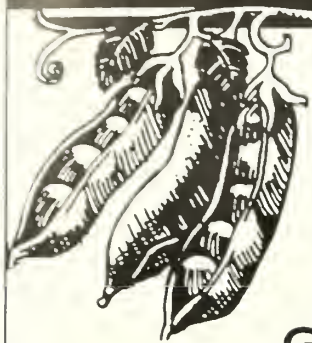
Starting at Noon—Includes 1 trip to Salad Bar

Breakfast Specials from \$1.95

Lunch Specials from \$3.95

350 BRADFORD STREET, PROVINCETOWN • 487-3368
IN THE FAR EAST END • FORMERLY "BASIL'S"
PLENTY OF FREE PARKING

ADRIAN'S



AT THE OUTER REACH

Join us and enjoy unique and innovative food, spectacular waterviews and sunsets. Dine inside or on our outdoor deck overlooking Cape Cod Bay.

GOURMET BREAKFAST

8:00 am - 12:00 noon (1:00 pm Sat. & Sun.)

Voted "Best Breakfast—Outer Cape"—CAPE COD LIFE

DINNER

5:30 - 10:00 pm

Specializing in regional Italian cuisine. Appetizers, salads, pasta dishes, wood-fired brick oven pizzas and entrees. "Best Pizza"—BOSTON MAGAZINE

TAKE OUT AVAILABLE

Featuring original artwork by local artists

• WEDDINGS & PRIVATE PARTIES • AMPLE FREE PARKING

Route 6 • North Truro • 487-4360 • 5 minutes from Provincetown



Painter's Food & Drink

50 Main Street, Wellfleet

"Simple Food in a Funky Place"

DINNER: 5—11 PM

UPSTAIRS TAVERN: 5PM—12:30AM

AMPLE PARKING

3 4 9 - 3 0 0 3

VISA, MC, AMEX



A book about art—about the art of dining. It is about the Cape's culinary artists and the experiences they create. It is about dining Cape Cod style.

A picaresque collection of Cape & Islands dining opportunities to discover.

One hundred profiles of the talented chefs and restaurateurs, locations and menus, that define dining on Cape Cod.

Entertaining and enlightening anecdotes to heighten your dining experiences.

An exclusive anthology in a beautifully-designed 9 x 12 paperbound format for \$14.95.

available at . . .

Brewster

The Brewster Bookstore,
Brewster General Store,
The Cook Shop

Chatham

Cabbages & Kings, The
Mayflower Shop, Yellow
Umbrella Books

Falmouth

The Market Bookshop

Hyannis

Way's News Center,
Barnes & Noble

Mashpee

Homecomings

Orleans

Booksmith, Compass Rose
Bookshop

Provincetown

The Provincetown Bookshop

Yarmouthport

Parnassus Book Services

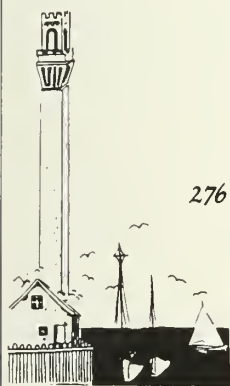
or by mail 1-800-231-2626

Cape Cod Dining Style

CABOT'S CANDY

FUDGE
SALT WATER TAFFY
JELLIES
PRESERVES

"The best for over 70 years"



276 Commercial Street
Provincetown
Mass. 02657
(508) 487-3550

PENNEY PATCH



279 COMMERCIAL STREET
PROVINCETOWN



★
★
★
**AFTER
THE
SHOW...**

BEN & JERRY'S
VERMONT'S FINEST • ICE CREAM & FROZEN YOGURT™

258 Commercial Street
Next to Provincetown Town Hall



PROVINCETOWN

GALLERY

GUIDE

1996

CAPE COD SCHOOL OF ART

48 Pearl St. 487-0101 • Summer '95 Schedule -call, write or stop by • Director: Lois Griffel
An art school in its 96th year - dedicated to the teaching philosophy of Charles Hawthorne and his rich legacy of American Impressionism.

CLIBBON GALLERY

120 Commercial St. 487-3563 • Daily 10am - 5pm; Fri. & Sat. 7pm to 9pm • Directors: Robert Clibbon & Melyssa Bearse
A summer gallery specializing in color etchings of marine and animal life, romantic themes and dune landscapes, Robert Clibbon and Melyssa Bearse, husband & wife, sell their work directly to the public. Meet the artists!

PETER COES STUDIO GALLERY

25 Pearl St. 487-1405
Daily year round: 11-3 & 7-11 & by appointment
Directors: Linda & Peter Coes
Exhibiting the well known narrative paintings of Provincetown, Cape Cod & the New England region by Peter Coes. The works show a keen interest and knowledge of the architecture and landscape of the area as demonstrated in his finely detailed narrative paintings & sculpture. Meet the artist.

DNA-Definitive New AA Gallery

288 Bradford St. 487-7700 • Located above Provincetown Tennis Club • Daily 11am - 9pm or by appointment • Director: Pamela Mandell
Featuring multi-media work by Bailey, Beal, Beard, Behrens, Benson Brothers, Chasteen Estate, Cooper, Critchley, Coebrook, Dunigan, English, Fabbri, Finley, Flanders, Gerity, Hamada, Hohlstein, Humphries, Hurwitz, Hutchinson, Jennings, Knowlton, Loheed, Lyman, Malicoat, Meyerowitz, Miller, Minot, Palazzo, Poor, Ranalli, Sterck & Rozo, Van Vactor & Vevers. Also reading series, poetry jams, performance AA, video & more

HARVEY DODD GALLERY

437 Commercial St. 487-3329 • Daily 11am - 11pm
Director: Harvey Dodd
A gallery of Dodd's expressive artwork in varied media, subject matter and approach. The 36th season.

ELEMENTS

338 Commercial St. 487-4351, FAX 487-2743; email bkettewel@vsn.net • Daily at 11am. Directors: Claudia Gal & Ben Kettlewell
A gallery whose primary focus is on contemporary handcrafted jewelry, representing over 80 different designers working in 14 kt. gold, sterling and mixed media. Also featured is an extensive collection of art glass, raku pottery, metal work and fine art by local as well as internationally known artists. Open year-round.

GALLERY 349

349 Commercial St. 487-1200 • Open daily at Noon in season; Select weekends or by appointment other times.
Director: Kir J. Priore
A gallery devoted exclusively to fine contemporary Provincetown art. Summer exhibitions changing weekly with opening receptions every Friday night. Representing Eric Aho, M.M. Batelle, Carole Carlson, Elisabeth Carney, Michael Carrol, Marc Cote, Jennifer Ditacchio, Jason Byron Gavann, James Hobin, Chet Jones, M. P. Landis, Michael Maguire, David Mamo, Richard Neal, Raphael Noz, John Rogers & Nancy Ruebens.

ELLEN HARRIS GALLERY

355 Commercial St. 487-1414 or 487-0065
Daily 11am - 11pm; Weekends thru the winter.
Director: Ellen Harris Winans
The 28th season. Special exhibitions featuring gallery artists through July and August. Fine arts & fine crafts by America's foremost artists & artisans always available. One of Provincetown's oldest galleries.

JULIE HELLER GALLERY

2 Gosnold St. 487-2169 • Across from Adams Pharm. On the Beach-Parking • Daily 11am-11pm & by appointment. Director: Julie Heller
A gallery dedicated to the artists that established Provincetown: Avery, Bailey*, Chaffee, W. M. Chase, Clymer*, de Groot*, Embry*, Freedman*, Hawthorne, Hensche, Hofmann, Knaths, Lazzell, L'Engle*, Marantz*, Moffett, Nordfeldt, Walkowitz, Weinrich, Zorach & others. New works by Burnell, Combs, Evans, Gordon, Mockler, Schneider, Sidor & Webb. *Estate representation.

LONG POINT GALLERY

492 Commercial St. 487-1795 • Daily 11am - 3pm; 8pm - 10pm or by appointment • Director: Rosalind Pace
20th season featuring works by:
Robert Beauchamp, Varujan Boghosian, Paul Bowen, Fritz Bultman, Carmen Cicero, Gilbert Franklin, Sideo Fromboluti, Edward Giobbi, Budd Hopkins, Leo Manso, Robert Motherwell, Renate Posnold, Paul Resika, Judith Rothschild, Sidney Simon, Nora Speyer, & Tony Vevers.

KENNEDY GALLERY

353 Commercial St. 487-3896 • Daily 10am-11pm & by appointment • Director: Frederick H. Schulenburg
A collection of original watercolors and oil paintings by Robert E. Kennedy and Michele Richard Kennedy. Also Featuring paintings by Michael Mazzola, Raymond Prosser, Mary Springer, Neil McAuliff, Arno Masters & wood carvings by Daniel Murphy. Special exhibitions.

LLAMA GALLERY

382 Commercial St. 487-2921 • Open daily and by special appointment • Director: Caroline McPhee
14th Season. A gallery of selected tribal art and artifacts from Africa, Asia and Oceania. Specializing in Oriental, Kilim and Tribal rugs as well as international folk art, textile art, furniture, decorative accessories and jewelry.

EVA DE NAGY ART GALLERY

427 Commercial St. 487-9669 • Daily 10am - 2pm; 7pm - 10pm • Off season by appointment
Director: Eva De Nagy
Established 1960. Paintings, pastels & drawings by Eva De Nagy; 17th century Phillipine Santos; ivory & semi-precious stone carvings; bronzes from Nepal; African & Asiatic art; jewelry designed by Eva De Nagy. Also paintings by Erno De Nagy, 1881-1952, American-Hungarian artist.

RICE/POLAK GALLERY

430 Commercial St. 487-1052 • Daily 11am - 11pm
Directors: Marla Rice & Richard Polak
Representing internationally known contemporary artists: paintings, assemblages, drawings, photography, sculpture & one-of-a-kind works in bronze, glass & clay. Special exhibitions by Olga Antonova, Elli Crocker, Lois Griffel, Michelle Harvey, Suzanne Howes-Stevens, Mallory Lake, Ellen LeBow, Shaun MacDavid, Romanos Rizk, Karin Rosenthal, Tom Seghi, Jan Collins Selman, Steven Skollar, Robin Winfield & many others.

PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM

460 Commercial St. 487-1750
<http://www.PAAM.com>
Daily in July & August 12n-4 pm; 7pm -10pm
Director: Robyn Watson
One of the foremost art museums in the country with a permanent collection of regional art from the past 80 years. Organized in 1914. Special exhibitions, juried shows, concerts, slide shows and other events throughout the year. Call for times.

PROVINCETOWN GALLERY

<http://www.CapeCodAccess.com/gallery>
Provincetown Gallery located only on World Wide Web
Director: Ewa Nogiec
Open to all Provincetown artists, permanently under construction.

RISING TIDE GALLERY

494 Commercial St. 487-4037 • Daily 11am - 5pm; 7pm - 10 pm • Director: Sara London
Openings Sundays: 6-8pm. Featuring the following contemporary artists from Provincetown, Boston, Maine & New York: Donald Beal, Rachel Brown, Robert Dutoit, Anthony Fisher, Fred Garbers, Noa Hall, Elspeth Halvorsen, Sidney Hurwitz, Peter Macara, Joan McD. Miller, Martin Mugar, Vita Petersen, Jack Phillips, Michael Rogovsky, David Shainberg, Ellen Sinclair & Peter Watts. Works include oils, watercolors, prints & box constructions.

HUDSON D. WALKER GALLERY

Fine Arts Work Center, 24 Pearl Street 487-9960
<http://www.CapeCodAccess.com/gallery/FAWC.html>
Mon., Thurs, Fri & Sat: 5pm-8pm; Sat 12n - 4pm; Sun 12n - 5pm or by appt.
Work by Fine Arts Work Center Fellows, past & present, and Summer Program Faculty: Richard Baker, Paul Bowen, Bernard Chaet, Sean Foley, Gregory Gillespie, Sidney Hurwitz, John Kearney, James Lechay, Michael Mazur, Sam Messer, Andrew Mockler, Jim Peters, Paul Resika, Elena Sisto, Duane Slick, Selina Trieff, Helen Miranda Wilson & Bert Yarrowrough.

BERTA WALKER GALLERY EAST

208 Bradford St. 487-6411 • Daily summer: 11am-4pm; 7pm-10pm or by appointment • Director: Berta Walker
<http://www.CapeCodAccess.com/BertaWalker/>
One-person exhibitions for: Graham Ashton, Bill Behnken, Romolo Del Deo, Martha Dunigan, Sue Fuller, Karen Harding, Robert Henry, James Lechay, Thomas McCanna, Bill McConnell, Lee Musselman, Jim Peters, Helen Strong, Selina Treiff, Nancy Whorf, Jane Winter, Ione Gaul Walker. Group exhibitions including Walkowitz, Avery, Lazell, DiMartini, Weinrich, Motherwell, Moffett, Chaffee & Resika.

WALKER'S WONDERS

153 Commercial St. • 487-6411 • Daily 6pm-11pm or by appointment
A gallery of Folk & Functional Art, Sculpture, Jewelry, Imaginative Objects, Special Delights.

WOHLFARTH GALLERIES

234 Commercial St. 487-6569 • Daily May through October. Director: Lavinia Wohlfarth
Representing the students of the Cape Cod School of Art - past & present - in the tradition of Charles Hawthorne & Henry Hensche. Special exhibitions of works by Lois Griffel, Robert Longley, William Papaleo, Margaret McWethy, Cedric & Joannette Egeli & John DiMestico. Also the home of W. Photography, Cape Cod's only gallery exclusive to photography.

PROVINCETOWN GALLERY GUILD

P. O. BOX 242
PROVINCETOWN, MA 02657
<http://www.CapeCodAccess.com/gallery/guide.html>

Karen Finley



In Performance

"The American Chestnut"

Saturday • August 17 • 1996

Town Hall • 9 p.m. • Provincetown

A BENEFIT FOR THE PROVINCETOWN ARTS PRESS

Tickets \$17 • Front row seats \$50 includes post-performance
reception & raffle of a Karen Finley drawing

ADULTS ONLY

Call In Town Reservations (508) 487-2234

PROVINCETOWN PAST PERFECT



E. AMBROSE WEBSTER, 1916

Provincetown Garden

*Actively Buying and Selling the
Best of Provincetown Prints and Paintings.*

Current inventory includes works by: BEHNKEN, BLUM, DELDEO, EVAUL, HAWTHORNE, HENSCHKE, KNATHS, LAZZELL, LINDENMUTH, MACARA, MOFFETT, MULHAUPT, PATTERSON, RIED, SHERWOOD, SMITH, TAYLOR, VILLARD, WARTHEN, WEINRICH, WHORF and WYMAN among others.

BAKKER GALLERY

236 NEWBURY STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02116
(617) 262-8020 FAX (617) 262-8019